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Constantine the Great was the world's first Christian Emperor. But he didn't start out that way...

Ruling from A.D. 307 to 337, Constantine began as many of his reign as a worshiper of Sol Invictus, "The Unconquerable Sun." But after a vision of the Cross led to his victory at the legendary Battle of the Milvian Bridge, and later to him being crowned sole Emperor of the Roman Empire, Constantine shifted his beliefs.

Believing that Sol Invictus and Christ were one and the same, Constantine legalized Christianity, allowing it to flourish. He merged the worship of Sol Invictus and Christ, creating religious practices still observed by modern-day Christians. And he authorized the striking of this Nummus coin—the first true coin of a Christian Empire, and thus the most important coin of Christian history.

TWO RELIGIONS BECOME ONE

To help convert the Romans, Constantine associated Sol Invictus with Christ:

- ☀ On December 25th, the Romans honored Sol with a winter solstice feast. Under Constantine, this became a celebration of Christ (Christmas).
- ☀ In A.D. 321, Constantine declared "Sun Day" as a day to rest and worship Sol Invictus. Upon converting, Constantine kept Sunday as the new Christian day of rest (instead of Saturday).
- ☀ Constantine merged the celebration of Christ's resurrection with that of the vernal equinox, moving Easter to the Sunday after the first full moon of the equinox.



Approximately 20 mm

FROM "SUN GOD" TO "SON OF GOD"

We recently located a cache of these 1,600-year-old coins, each featuring Sol Invictus on its obverse. This was a savvy move by Constantine, who was converting the Roman Empire to Christianity with a merging of religions.

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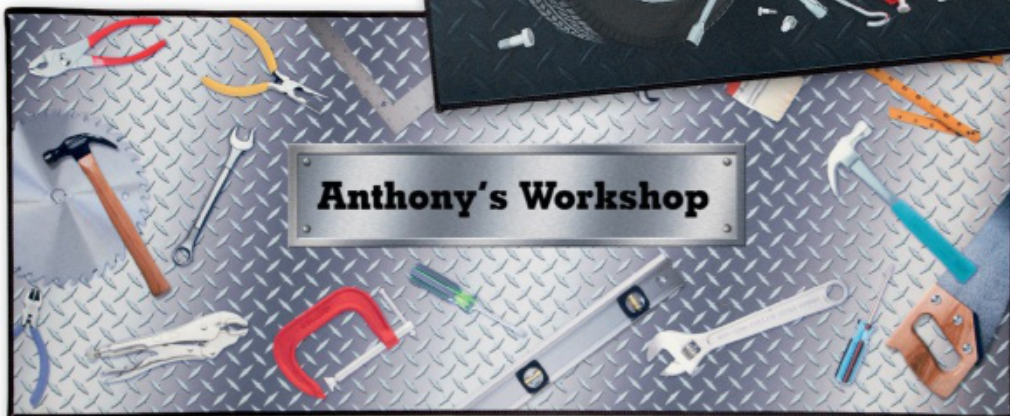


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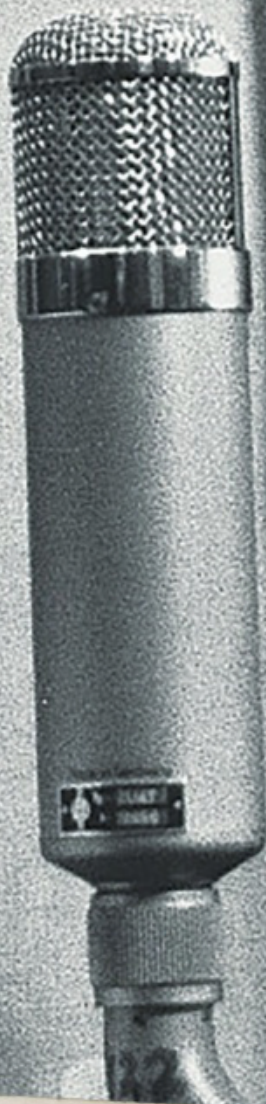
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Frank Sinatra's mature pipes gained a richer context with Nelson Riddle writing charts and leading orchestras.



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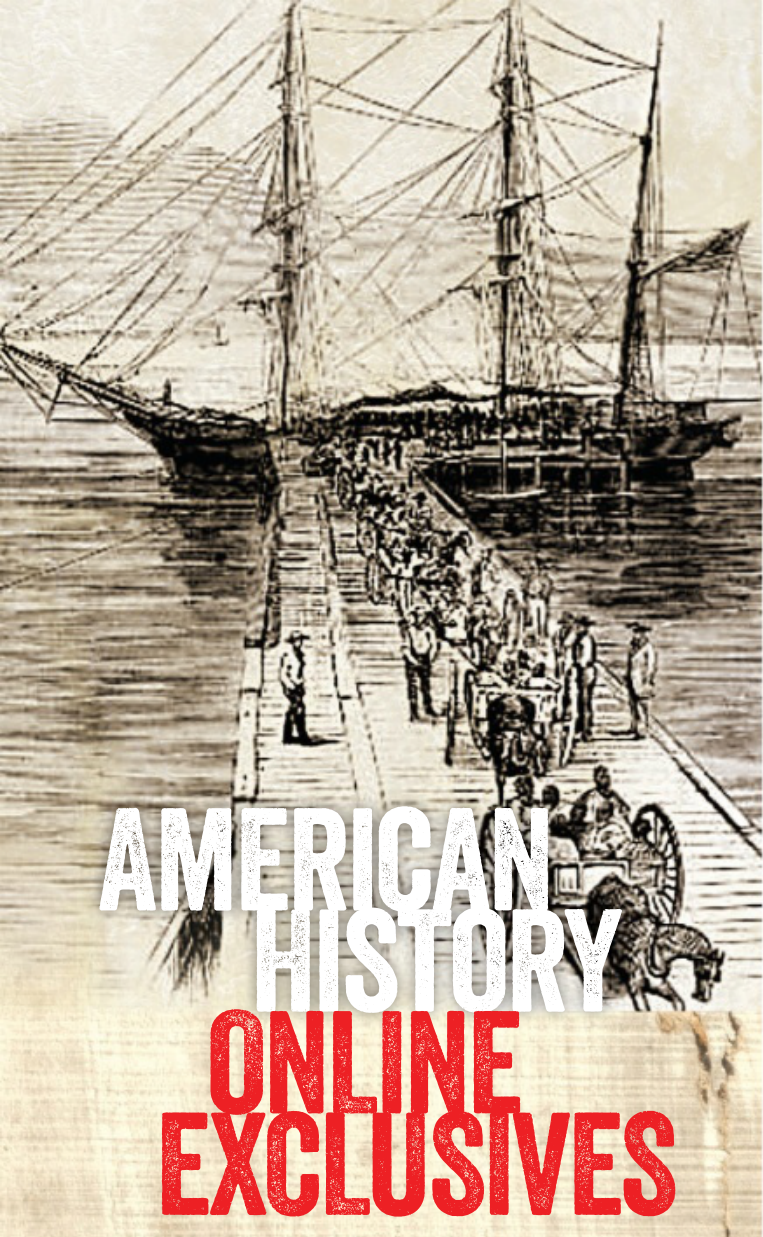


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Even today, boozehounds can celebrate the reign of Norton I with a snootful of absinthe.

ON THE COVER: Serendipity kept Marine gunnery officer Robert D. Taplett away from Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941. He went on to a wartime career that included sailing on the Doolittle Raid.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY ARCHIVES; COURTESY OF THE TAPLETT FAMILY; MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK; LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; COVER: NATIONAL ARCHIVES/PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN WALKER



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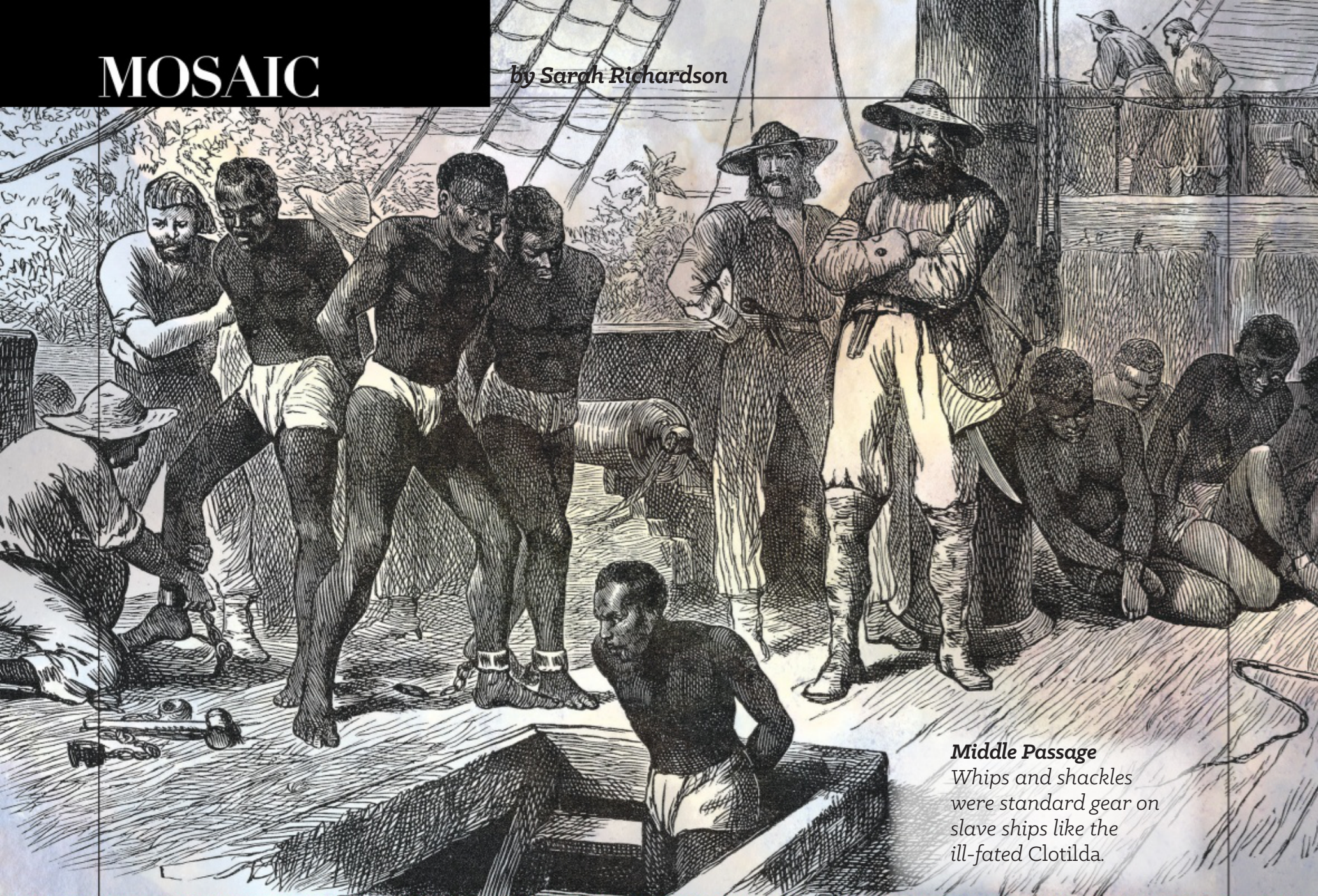


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Middle Passage
Whips and shackles were standard gear on slave ships like the ill-fated *Clotilda*.

Discovery in 2019 near Mobile, Alabama, of *Clotilda*—the last vessel to smuggle slaves from Africa into the United States, wrecked in 1860—made headlines. A recent report focuses on one of 100-some survivors of that ship's deliveries: a captive kidnapped across the Atlantic at age two who spent part of her childhood in Mobile's Africatown neighborhood among other *Clotilda* survivors. Tildy McCrear renamed herself, maintained her West African identity, and enjoyed a common-law marriage with a German-born white man, bearing 14 children. In 1931, McCrear, 70, with Redoshi Smith, another *Clotilda* survivor, sued seeking compensation for their enslavement. The case was summarily dismissed by a Selma, Ala., probate judge. McCrear, the last *Clotilda* survivor, died in 1939. Hannah Durkin of England's Newcastle University reconstructed her and her family members' lives in the journal *Slavery and Abolition* in March 2020.

Reparations Reminder

Many enslaved African Americans sued for their freedom. McCrear was seeking compensation post-emancipation. She was inspired to act on her own behalf when Cudjo Lewis, born Oluale Kossola, a well-known *Clotilda* survivor and Africatown resident, received donations after word spread of his financial needs. As an elderly sharecropper, McCrear was among many devastated when the Depression crushed cotton prices. Her story and suit were covered in a 1932 newspaper article. Selma reporter Octavia Wynn, a United Daughters of the Confederacy member, wrote that "Tildy [McCrear] believed that being snatched from her home in Africa, while yet an infant, called for a little reimbursement."

The reparations movement has percolated for decades. On June 5, BET founder Robert Johnson said he will seek \$14 trillion in reparations to be shared among blacks nationwide. Noting unrest arising from mistreatment of black Americans (see p. 7), the National Museum for African American History and Culture, ahead of schedule, opened a portal, "Talking about Race" [s.si.edu/3hHNRwz]. Smithsonian Institution Secretary Lonnie Bunch urged the nation to confront "its tortured past," adding "History is a guide to a better future and demonstrates that we can become a better society—but only if we collectively demand it from each other and from the institutions responsible for administering justice."

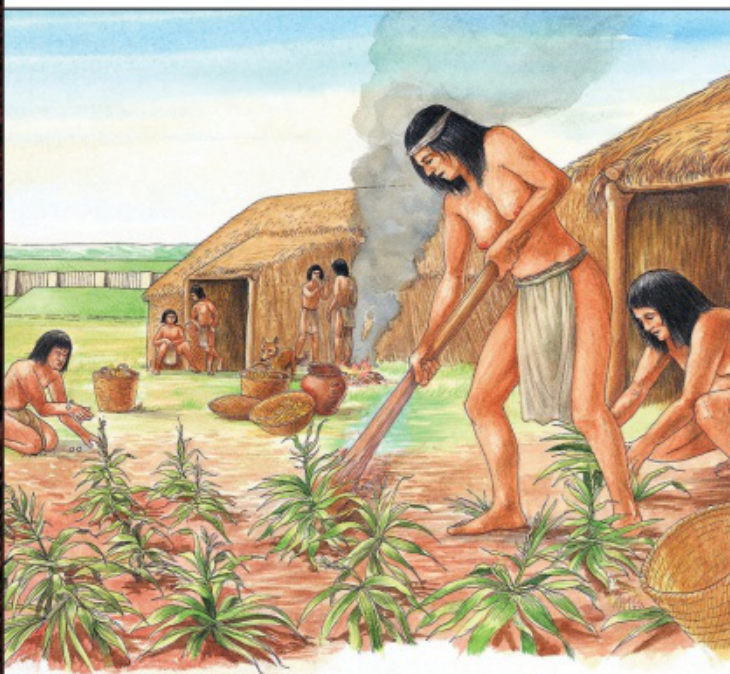
Slavery's Stain Protested

A statue of a Confederate soldier on display in Alexandria, Virginia, since 1889 was taken down on June 2, 2020. Former Confederate capital Richmond, Virginia, announced plans to remove its Confederate monuments, an action now tied up in court. On June 5, 2020, the U.S. Marine Corps banned public display of the Confederate flag; the U.S. Navy is following suit. The Defense Department is considering renaming 10 Army posts named after Confederate commanders. These actions followed overwhelming public outcry, largely mobilized by a video of George Floyd, 46, an African American man, struggling May 25 in the grip of an 8-minute, 46-second chokehold and body restraint applied by a Minneapolis, Minnesota, police officer, assisted by three others. Floyd was declared dead shortly after. People marched worldwide in support of Black Lives Matter, an ad hoc movement protesting the fact that in the United States blacks are 2.5 times as likely as whites to be killed by police—a pattern linked to race-based bias dating to the country's origins as a slavery-based economy.

As of June 16, 28 Confederate monuments have been or are set to be removed in the United States. Protesters vandalized Confederate monuments throughout the South and on May 31 set fire to the headquarters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia. Antipathy to slavery-related

Numbered Days?
Plans to remove a statue of Robert E. Lee in Richmond, Virginia, face a legal challenge in that state's courts.

displays crossed the Atlantic. In England, on June 7, protesters toppled a statue of slave trader and philanthropist Edward Colston, a fixture in Bristol since 1895. On June 9, a statue of Robert Milligan, a Scottish Jamaica-born slave trader and planter instrumental in founding London's West India Docks, was removed from where it had stood, lately in front of the Museum of London Docklands, since 1809. A statue in Ekeren, Belgium, of King Leopold II, ruler of that nation during its colonialist abuses of Africans in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo, was removed after protesters torched it. At press time at least five statues of Christopher Columbus, who began European colonization of the New World, had been toppled or removed by protesters or city authorities in Minneapolis, Richmond, Boston, Camden, New Jersey, and Wilmington, Delaware.



Corn consumption at Cahokia, a large Native American settlement northeast of what is now St. Louis, Missouri, rose between 900 and 1000, new data show. The increase occurred just before Cahokia's population rose quickly from a few hundred to several thousand. Studies at various sites of charred corn kernels and human and canine teeth drastically recast thinking as to when Cahokia-area Native Americans made corn a mainstay, left. Corn, domesticated in Mesoamerica and grown in the American Southwest in 4000 BCE, apparently was much slower to work its way into prominence in the diet of the Cahokia people of the Mississippi Valley. When corn—or its cultivators—had adapted to conditions there, the grain proved a big boost to the crops of squash and beans already cultivated by Cahokians.

Corn-Fed Cahokia

Americans made corn a mainstay, left. Corn, domesticated in Mesoamerica and grown in the American Southwest in 4000 BCE, apparently was much slower to work its way into prominence in the diet of the Cahokia people of the Mississippi Valley. When corn—or its cultivators—had adapted to conditions there, the grain proved a big boost to the crops of squash and beans already cultivated by Cahokians.



128 years after Ida B. Wells published a groundbreaking report on lynchings of blacks in the South, the journalist and editor received a citation from the Pulitzer Prize board. The board hailed Wells's "outstanding and courageous reporting on the horrific and vicious violence against African Americans during the era of lynching." Born enslaved at Holly Springs, Mississippi, in 1862, Wells, left, became a

Pulitzer for Ida B. Wells

teacher. In 1889 she began reporting on racist lynchings after whites killed three friends of hers in Memphis, Tennessee. She worked on black-owned

Memphis paper *The Free Speech and Headlight* and *The Chicago Conservator*, traveled abroad on speaking tours, and in 1909, helped found the NAACP. In her 1892 booklet *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*, Wells wrote, "The Afro American is not a bestial race. If this work can contribute in any way toward proving this, and at the same time arouse the conscience of the American people to a demand for justice to every citizen, and punishment by law for the lawless, I shall feel I have done my race a service. Other considerations are of minor importance." A monument to her is planned in Chicago, where she died, age 68, in 1931; idabwellsmonument.org.

Black History Grants

\$14 million in National Park Service grants are earmarked to preserve sites related to the black civil rights struggle. The 51 projects in 21 states

range from \$37,000 to fund oral histories of women in the struggle to register black voters in Selma, Alabama, to \$500,000 grants to restore churches, schools, and Urban League headquarters in Detroit, Michigan. Revenue from federal oil leases is funding the efforts. A total of 145 related interviews is accessible through the Library of Congress YouTube channel and the National Museum for African American History and Culture website.

Looking Back

Morris Brown College, whose baseball team is shown, is among sites set for grant projects.



TOP BID \$106,250

An 1875 drawing by Cheyenne artist Ho-na-nist-to, known as Howling Wolf, set a world record for a single depiction in the genre of

pictures made on ledger paper at Heritage Auctions in Dallas. At 26, Howling Wolf was among 72 Southern Plains warriors who surrendered in 1875 to U.S. Army troops. The prisoners spent three years confined at Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida. With pencils and paper provided by the prison warden, Howling Wolf experimented with ledger drawings, including one of himself at the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre. Briefly embracing but later renouncing white ways, he cited the destruction of buffalo herds that had sustained his people as his reason for reclaiming his heritage. Howling Wolf was working in a Native American dance show when he died in a car accident in 1927 [For more information about the 1875 drawing, see bit.ly/HowlingWolfDrawings. The Sand Creek Massacre drawing is at bit.ly/MassacreDrawing].



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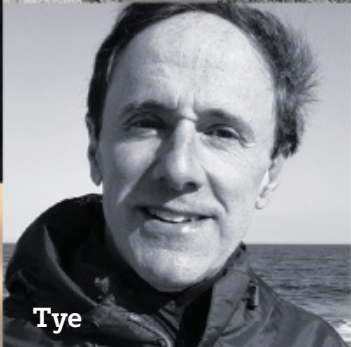
CONTRIBUTORS



Huntington



Carlson



Tye



Serkin



Taplett

Peter Carlson (“Lavender Legend,” p. 44), a long-time pillar of these pages, writes the American Schemers column. His most recent article was “Taken” (April 2019).

Thomas Huntington (“The Riddle of Sinatra,” p. 52), a former editor of this publication, most recently contributed “Margaret Chase Smith Defies Joe McCarthy” (bit.ly/SmithStandsUp).

Rachel Serkin manages school programs for the Museum at Eldridge Street in Lower Manhattan. “Sanitation Innovation” (p. 36) marks her debut writing for the magazine.

Robert D. Taplett enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1940. “So This is War!” (p. 24) is adapted from a diary he kept as a fledgling gunnery officer during the waning months of an uneasy peace and America’s tumultuous entry into World War II. We thank the Taplett family for making available this previously unpublished material and accompanying images.

Journalist **Larry Tye** (larrytye.com) has published seven books. He adapted “The Death of Tailgunner Joe” (p. 60) from his latest, *Demagogue: The Life and Long Shadow of Senator Joe McCarthy* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt). He last wrote for the magazine in December 2016 about Robert F. Kennedy and race.

Letters

Times Times

I’ve been a *Los Angeles Times* staffer 32 years, but the well-reported “Battle of Los Angeles” (April 2020) revealed much I didn’t know about the 1910 bombing—and how that violence affected the future of Los Angeles. Examining the lead photograph was like seeing an old friend. At upper right, atop the bombed-out building, is a bronze eagle, wings outstretched. That statue stood atop three *Times* buildings and in 1956 was installed in the lobby of our last downtown office (bit.ly/LATimesEagle). I walked past that statue for years. We’ve since moved to a new office in El Segundo and the eagle, at least for now, is in storage, but I’m sure it will see the light of day again. Its silhouette is the emblem of the Los Angeles Times Guild, which unionized the paper’s newsroom in 2018.

Steve Padilla

Los Angeles, California

Dissed Union

A snarky cover line (“Union Goons Bomb LA Times”) ill served an excellent, even-handed article (“Battle of Los Angeles,” April 2020). Employers like the *Times* historically thwarted organizing and broke strikes with bloody intimidation, as during the 1892 steelworkers strike at Homestead, Pennsylvania, a 1914 massacre of strikers by authorities



at Ludlow, Colorado, and the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain, West Virginia. The McNamara brothers, products of those times, were answering violence with violence. Save for the tragedy at the *Times*, caused by a terrible blunder and cruel coincidence, the ironworkers’ 1906-11 bombing campaign

inflicted no casualties. Once workers secured the right to organize and to strike and courts stopped enjoining union activity, bombing campaigns disappeared—and Southern California became and remains a stronghold of union membership and influence.

Brian A. Powers

Washington, DC

CORRECTIONS

In “Slavery’s Long Reach” (June 2020), transposed captions on p. 47 misidentified Andrew Cochrane as John Witherspoon and vice versa. In “Atlanta, Burning” (June 2020) a caption on p. 54 misidentified the woman in the middle photo at left as Dorothy Owen. Her name was Dorothy Moen.

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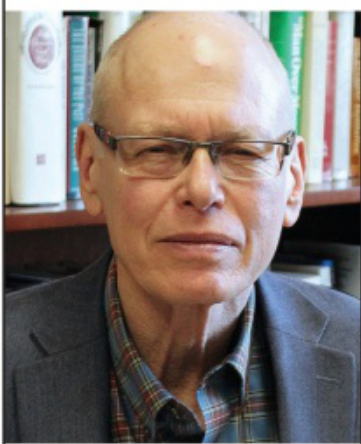
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OVERTIME AT THE HISTORY WORKS

BY RICHARD ERNSBERGER JR.



Politics dominates decisions about what goes into textbooks, according to historian Walter Buenger.

Besides being Summerlee Foundation Chair in Texas History at The University of Texas, Austin, Walter L. Buenger is chief historian for the Texas State Historical Association. Buenger, who earned a Ph.D. from Rice University, has written or co-written four books. He is writing a re-conceptualization of Texas and the Southwest, working title *Texas Since 1810: Border Crossings and Shifting Identities over Time*.

The Texas State Board of Education has sparked controversy with a textbook review process in which politics and ideology have appeared to drive revisions to American history texts. To a degree that should make any

historian uncomfortable, politics remains at the heart of decisions as to what should and should not go in textbooks and be emphasized in public school classrooms. The most revealing issue is what caused the Civil War. In recent years the board finally conceded that slavery was the primary cause, but it still insists on listing secondary causes.

Should parents, politicians and others with no academic background serve on textbook review panels? No, but they deserve to be heard. Publishers and authors should base textbooks on firm evidence, especially primary source evidence, and on informed

Articles of Faith
Minutiae like the Alamo's roofline reveal fault lines in popular thinking about history.

debate about the past by professional historians. Still, we need a pragmatic approach that listens respectfully to those outside the profession and explains the need for evidence-based history. This approach can be slow, as seen in the long fight about the causes of the Civil War, but it does bring change that is generally more widely accepted. Antagonism is counterproductive.

Aside from indisputable facts, is it fair to say there is no completely objective way to teach an interpretative subject like history? Complete objectivity is an impossible dream. History changes with the times and with the given historian's point of view—but history that moves from evidence-based to opinion- and ideology-based ceases to be history. Teachers and historians must be aware that they bring their own life experiences and possible biases to bear. They need to counter that, to the extent possible, by being open-minded and by listening to other teachers and other historians. They need to read, study, and learn. I recommend approaching the past from the past forward, not from the present backward. To explain secession, for example, go back to 1850, then come forward. Do not start in 2020 with all the biases and pre-conceptions of our age and go back to 1861.

Do some topics lend themselves more to interpretation than others? Capitalism, say, can be viewed from very different angles. Yes, of course. Many in the profession do argue about capitalism. I find the argument that enslaved labor was an extreme form of capitalism and a tool to reduce the cost of production to be a compelling one. Still, if you assume capitalism to have been built upon wage labor, elements of slavery are pre-capitalist. There is also room for nuanced, multi-faceted arguments about the cause, outcome, and impact of World War I. That list could go on, and surely is longer than a list of topics about which historians overwhelmingly agree. The key for me is to stay humble. I could be wrong. We could be wrong, and we as a profession need to be willing to change and engage in respectful debate about the past.

Have you ever caught flak for your viewpoints? I always catch flak. One example: I often say that in 1836 the Alamo had a flat roof. That fancy top was added a decade later, and that's a metaphor for understanding the Texas Revolution and much of Texas history: It's been added on after the fact. The average student's or average non-historian's knowledge of Texas and U.S. history is heavily influenced by what someone wants to believe or what their ideology, status, or uncritical reading encourages them to believe. I take students and all who will listen back to 1836, and alert them to the dangers of listening to what was added on after the fact.

A recent *New York Times* article compared sharp differences between

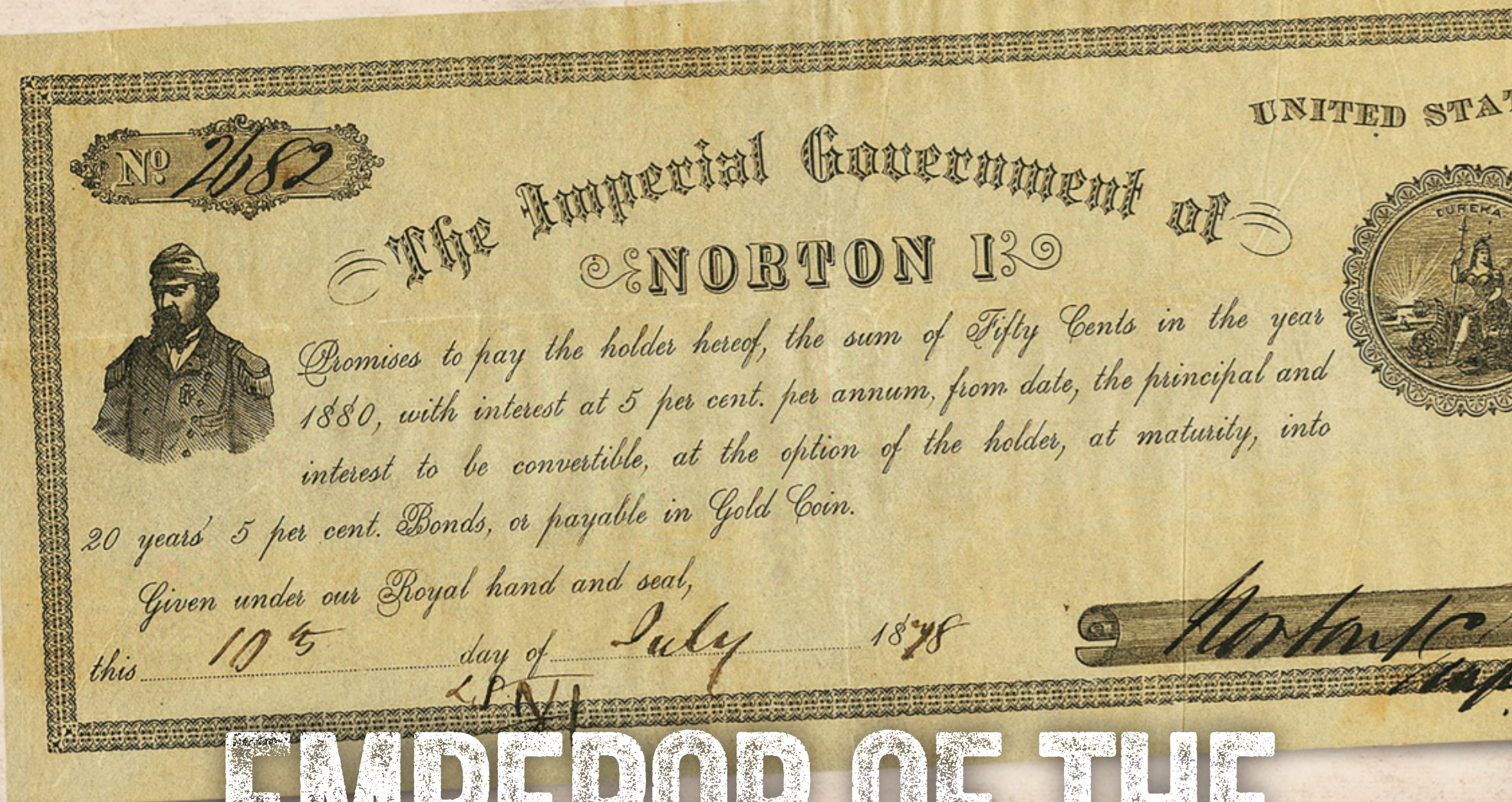
history texts in California and those in Texas on immigration, guns, Reconstruction, civil rights, and other topics. California books seem to reflect a progressive viewpoint while Texas puts on a conservative spin—attributing opposition to Reconstruction, for example, to tax increases as well as racial resentment. Did these differences surprise you? No. In Texas, history—or perhaps I should say mythology—has always been political. Part of that reflects an ongoing attempt to maintain and conserve white supremacy and the status of the elite. To say that during Reconstruction complaints about taxation were especially loud because those taxes might benefit African Americans—to add that nuance about the past—calls the present into question.

Can politics be kept out of history? No. Politics cannot be kept out of history, but politics can help, for example, to take students to online sources where they can examine the reasons the Texas Secession Convention gave in 1861 for seceding. Let the students read the primary source themselves and provide context such as the stubborn fact that from 1850 to 1860 the fastest growing part of the Texas population was slaves.

Is a national standard for social-study textbooks desirable or even possible? A national standard might be a good thing, but how do you agree on that standard? It does not seem possible. Do you poll every historian? Do you appoint an elite committee? How do you listen to non-historians? The best solution probably is to have simple national guidelines that are endorsed by the major historical associations and organizations.

When everyone has a version of the truth, can educators hope to engender consensus on America's history? I'm not especially optimistic that history can escape being a casualty of the culture wars, especially given the radical right's general disdain for expertise in any field. All I can do is suggest that historians stay humble, avoid treating those who seem wrong-headed with disdain, and try to stress the need for a past-forward approach. If we can simply get across the concept that many people are looking at the past from the wrong end of the telescope, I could justify a smidgeon of optimism. ★

THERE IS ROOM FOR ARGUMENT. HISTORIANS NEED TO STAY HUMBLE, TO CHANGE, AND TO ENGAGE IN RESPECTFUL DEBATE ABOUT THE PAST.



EMPEROR OF THE IMAGINATION

BY PETER CARLSON



L'état, C'est Moi

Norton made a life's work out of making up a spurious title and using it as a tool for harmless self-aggrandizement, as in his issuance of "imperial bonds."

Dressed, as always, in his blue uniform and a hat crowned with peacock feathers, ceremonial sword dangling from his belt, Norton I, Emperor of the United States, strode through a cold rain, heading to a lecture at San Francisco's Academy of Natural Sciences. It was January 8, 1880. A few steps from his destination, Norton staggered, then fell to the sidewalk. By the time police arrived, he was dead.

Reporters who'd been covering the Emperor for decades hustled to the morgue and jotted notes about the contents of his pockets—a few silver coins, a French franc, a gold piece worth \$2.50 and a pile of the "Imperial Government" bonds Norton sold for 50 cents each.

"Le Roi Est Mort," read the headline in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which reported that 10,000 people gathered to view the Emperor's royal remains: "The visitors included all classes from the capitalist to the pauper, the clergyman and the pickpocket..." In Seattle, Denver,

Philadelphia, and New York, newspapers ran obituaries. "Emperor Norton Gives Up the Ghost," the *Cincinnati Enquirer* headlined. "An Emperor Without Enemies, A King Without a Kingdom, Gone to Kingdom Come."

Joshua Abraham Norton was not born to the purple. He was a self-made—or self-proclaimed—emperor. Born in England in 1818, he emigrated with his family to South Africa, where the Nortons became wealthy merchants. In 1849, with his parents dead and a gold rush beckoning, Norton took his inheritance and sailed to San Francisco.

Smart enough and rich enough to avoid digging for gold, Norton settled in town, buying real estate, starting a cigar factory and a rice mill, and dealing in wholesale commodities. By 1852, he was richer, given to amusing business cronies with monologues urging that America ditch democracy and become a monarchy. "If I were Emperor of the United States," he said,

“you would see great changes effected.”

Friends laughed. They thought he was kidding.

In 1852, a famine caused China to ban export of rice, causing rice prices in San Francisco to skyrocket. When a shipload of Peruvian rice docked, Norton mortgaged his land holdings and bought all 200,000 lbs., at 12.5 cents per. Assuming he'd cornered the San Francisco rice trade, he anticipated huge profits. But more rice arrived, glutting the market. The price plummeted to 3 cents. Norton went broke and lost the real estate he'd mortgaged. Ruined, he declared bankruptcy in 1855 and disappeared, living in flophouses, avoiding his rich pals.

On September 17, 1859, Norton reemerged, strolling into the *Evening Bulletin* office, demanding that the newspaper publish his handwritten proclamation: “At the peremptory request of a large majority of the citizens of these United States, I, Joshua Norton, formerly of Algoa Bay, Cape of Good Hope, and now for the past nine years and ten months of San Francisco, California, declare and proclaim myself Emperor of these United States...”

He signed his decree “Norton I, Emperor of the United States.” An impish editor published it under the headline, “Have We An Emperor Among Us?”

The notion of having their own Emperor amused San Franciscans, so the *Bulletin* published more Norton proclamations, now couched in the royal we. “We do hereby abolish Congress,” he wrote in his second decree. Soon, he was deep-sixing the rest of the government: “We, Norton I, by the Grace of God Emperor of the 33 States and the multitude of Territories of the United States of North America, do hereby dissolve the Republic of the United States...” He replaced that republic with “an Absolute Monarchy,” headed, of course, by himself.

Norton's proclamations proved so popular that when he failed to add to his oeuvre, newspapers sometimes drafted fakes. He became San Francisco's most famous eccentric, strolling the streets blue-uniformed and in plumed hat, chatting with his royal subjects, who bowed and called him “Your Majesty.” Theaters reserved seats for him on opening nights. The Central Pacific Railroad gave him a free pass. Shops sold Emperor Norton postcards, dolls, and cigars. A local theater featured “Norton the First,” a musical that, one reviewer wrote, caused “irrepressible laughter.”

Somehow, the Emperor neglected to collect his cut of profits from the play, the souvenirs and the cigars. But the man who'd attempted to corner the rice market hadn't lost his entrepreneurial outlook. He supported himself by selling official-looking “bonds” issued by “The Imperial Government of Norton I.”

Most cost 50 cents and featured the Emperor's picture and his promise to re-pay the half-dollar, plus 7 percent interest, in 1880. Norton sold enough bonds to be able to afford restaurant meals and pay his 50-cent daily rent at Eureka Lodgings, a fleabag joint on Commercial Street.

In 1867, an over-zealous cop arrested Norton as a “lunatic” requiring “involuntary treatment of a mental disorder.” The newspapers howled

in protest: “The kindly Monarch of Montgomery Street is less a lunatic than those who engineered these trumped-up charges.” The Emperor was quickly released.

Was he insane? Did he really believe himself to be an emperor? Or was he a proto-performance artist earning a living by parodying royalty? Two famous San Francisco reporters reached conflicting conclusions. Ambrose Bierce, the renowned cynic, saw Norton as a fraud who had found a way to live “without physical or mental toil.”

Mark Twain disagreed: “Although nobody else believed he was an emperor, he believed it.” Norton's most assiduous biographer, William Drury, agreed with Twain, concluding that the Emperor was schizophrenic.

Norton might have been crazy but he wasn't stupid. He spent afternoons in the Mechanics Library, studying technical publications, and he designed a railroad switch that was, alas, never constructed. An 1872 proclamation urged the construction of a bridge between San Francisco and Oakland and said exactly where. Six decades later, the Bay Bridge was built on the route Norton suggested.

And the Emperor never lost his talent for financial finagling. As 1879 was ending, it came to him that he'd floated hundreds of bonds promising a payoff in 1880. Of course, he couldn't keep that promise, so he did what sketchy bond sellers do: He offered to replace the old bonds with new bonds, payable in 1890.

A week later, felled by a stroke, he dropped dead on a rain-soaked sidewalk. Cronies funded an elegant rosewood casket and thousands lined the streets to watch horses haul Norton to his grave.

Today, the Emperor's original 50-cent bonds are said to be worth \$15,000 apiece. His name and image adorn T-shirts, mugs, bottles of Emperor Norton Absinthe, and a San Francisco bar, Emperor Norton's Boozeland. Tourists pay \$30 for a three-hour walking tour of San Francisco led by a guide in full Norton regalia, impersonating the man who impersonated an Emperor. Have any “real” emperors inspired so many smiles 140 years after their demises? ★



Royal Round

Distillers are still making hooch whose label lauds the man who would have been emperor.

Hardest Times
At Valley Forge, Washington used inoculation and secrecy to guard his men against the pox and the British.

PANDEMIC AS PROLOGUE

BY RICHARD BROOKHISER

The coronavirus needs no introduction. The disease has stalked the globe, slaying tens of thousands, infecting millions, and erasing trillions in economic activity. Artists' renderings of the bug as a blue sphere with red frilly excrescences have hung on our small screens like so many notions of the Death Star—infection as celebrity. Nearly all other mass-cult mug shots, from Kanye and Kim to Harry and Meghan, have faded into irrelevance.

But not President Donald Trump, however, crisis-managing via TV appearances, Drs. Deborah Birx and Anthony Fauci sometimes at his side. Governor Andrew Cuomo of hard-hit New York joined them in ubiquity, giving daily briefings of his own. How do their performances in this crisis compare to pandemics past?

George Washington, who lived through two, offers a handy yardstick.

The American Revolution coincided with a smallpox outbreak that eventually blanketed all of North America. The then-unidentified virus first appeared late in 1774 in British-occupied Boston. Soldiers in American forces

besieging that city after the battles of Lexington and Concord began showing symptoms in mid-1775. Washington suspected that the enemy had smuggled sick persons or contaminated objects into American ranks.

Washington himself was immune, courtesy of a case contracted on a youthful trip to Barbados that left him with a scarred nose but also a get-out-of-lazaretto-free card. What to do for those not so favored? Edward Jenner had yet to discover vaccination, but an imperfect form of protection did exist. Passing an infected thread through a flesh wound—a long-standing treatment known as inoculation—brought on the disease, hopefully in mild form, rewarding survivors with immunity. The chance of death remained, but at a rate significantly lower than among patients caught by ordinary contagion. In a sparsely populated rural society, many feared, not unreasonably, to take that risk—why give oneself smallpox, if there was next to no likelihood that you would ever meet a carrier? In colonial America inoculation had been erratically employed and controversial; Benjamin Franklin, in his days as a journalist, had waged a newspaper campaign against the method. However, when thousands of young men from all over the rebellious colonies assembled in the newly created Continental Army, the danger of contagion increased exponentially.

Washington's first remedy was to quarantine the sick, a constraint impossible in an army on the move. Forces he sent with Benedict Arnold across the wilderness of northern Maine to conquer Quebec at year's end suffered horribly. Washington's next thought was to require men to be inoculated in their home states, when and where they enlisted. But there

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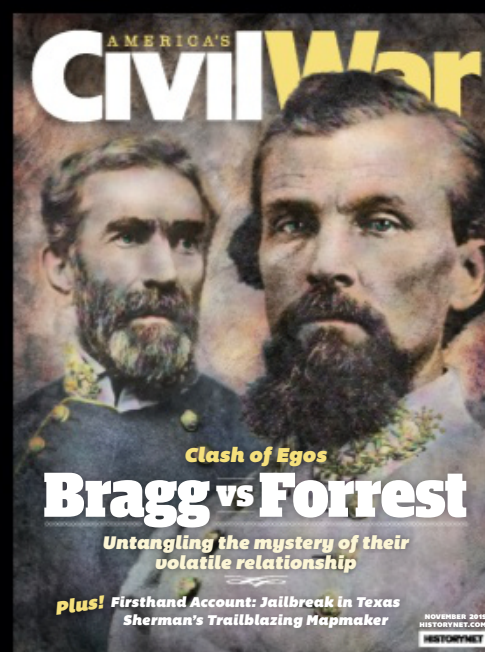
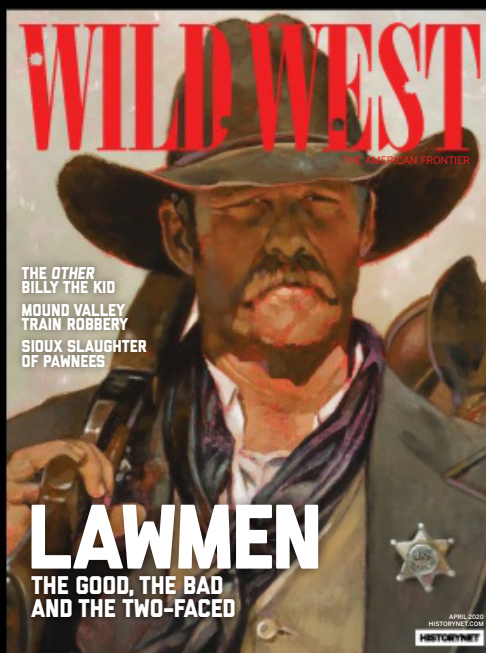


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was no way to ensure consistent proper inoculation. During the Valley Forge winter, 1777-78, Washington put the starving, shivering men under his immediate supervision through a program of on-site inoculation. This military public health program had to be undertaken in phases, and in secret, since the regimen temporarily weakened recipients. Had the enemy learned that a cohort of Washington's effectives was out of commission, they might have launched a winter attack.



Fortunately, the British remained clueless until winter was almost over. During periods of robustness, meanwhile, Americans had learned infantry drill under Baron Friedrich von Steuben. Washington's army left Valley Forge professional—and immune.

Away from the battlefield, the disease spread. Elizabeth Fenn, author of *Pox Americana*, the classic account of that pandemic, traced the pathogen's route through records kept by Spanish missionaries in New Mexico, where monthly tallies of burials suddenly spiked by an order of magnitude. Fenn wrote that the spectacle of death made manifest, over and over, even in these barren figures, made her weep. She found in the records of the Hudson Bay Company references to similar sinister eruptions devastating Indians of the Canadian west who came into contact with fur traders.

Washington encountered his second pandemic early in his second term as president. In August 1793, yellow fever struck Philadelphia, the nation's capital and largest city. Yellow fever, unlike smallpox, was terra incognita for 18th-century medicine. The symptoms were obvious; fever, aches, chills, vomiting; then, in a second deadly phase, bloody vomit and

jaundice. No one knew what caused the fever, or how to treat it. Doctors, some debating in the press, theorized that the ailment passed from person to person, or was borne by contaminated air.

As means of prevention physicians recommended burning tobacco and gunpowder and rubbing oneself with camphor. For treatment they prescribed laying patients in large, airy rooms, or—favored by Dr. Benjamin Rush, Philadelphia's premier medico—bleeding and purging. The disease is in fact spread by mosquitos, the vector Carlos Finlay and Walter Reed identified a century later. Eighteenth-century measures ranged from useless to annoying—all that smoke—to deadly.

As he had made his custom, President Washington left Philadelphia for Mount Vernon early that September, not intending to return until Congress met in December. Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton stayed longer and caught the fever but recovered, whereupon he decamped to Albany. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson observed the unfolding disaster from the Philadelphia suburbs, or Monticello. Those men's absence was not critical: peacetime disease control was then thought to be the province not of the federal government but of local officials. Most of Philadelphia officialdom, however, vamoosed. Governor Thomas Mifflin gave one unhelpful order—fire a cannon down the streets to clear the air—then left town. In *Bring Out Your Dead* J.H. Powell, modern chronicler of that pandemic, describes the exodus: "Councilmen left, and aldermen, judges and magistrates, clerks, brokers, chimney sweeps and carters. Constables fled, and nurses, drivers and notaries, printers, scribes and bankers. The 23 night watchmen supposed to be on duty every night dwindled to a handful."

Responsibility for the stricken city reverted to Mayor Matthew Clarkson and an odd lot of doughty volunteers. Clarkson was a conservative Federalist; many of his helpers were middle-class Democrats. Absalom Jones, merchant, and Richard Allen, minister, were former slaves. Several were French immigrants. The cadre commandeered a mansion and organized the regular pick-up, nursing, and burial of sufferers.

Through early fall the toll mounted; 5,000 died, a tenth of greater Philadelphia's population. Washington wondered where the federal government could meet. Could he convene it elsewhere? Jefferson told him no, the capital's location was fixed by law. Hamilton said yes, of course; desperate times require desperate measures. At the end of October Washington moved to Germantown, a suburb 10 miles north of the city proper. On November 10 he rode into town alone, bowing to the no-doubt astonished pedestrians he passed. Philadelphia looked healthy to him. So it was—the first frosts had killed the region's murderous mosquitos.

What 18th-century patterns reappear in the 21st? Dueling ignorance is a hardy perennial. Even when a proven remedy exists, as with inoculation and smallpox, doubters will doubt. When all is uncertain, as with yellow fever, doctors quarrel and, worse, take those quarrels to the media.

Now as then, the community's psychological health tracks the same arc—panic, then endurance, then relief—and forgetfulness. "It is not deaths that make a plague," writes Powell, "it is fear and hopelessness in people."

As ever, cool heads remain vital, like Washington's at Valley Forge, or Clarkson's and his volunteers'. Even Benjamin Rush, wrong though he was about remedies, spread comfort by his unflagging attendance on the sick. If you need examples of that—and its opposite—turn on your TV. ★

Giant Step

In 1796 Edward Jenner inoculated a baby with cowpox, a step on the path to vaccination.

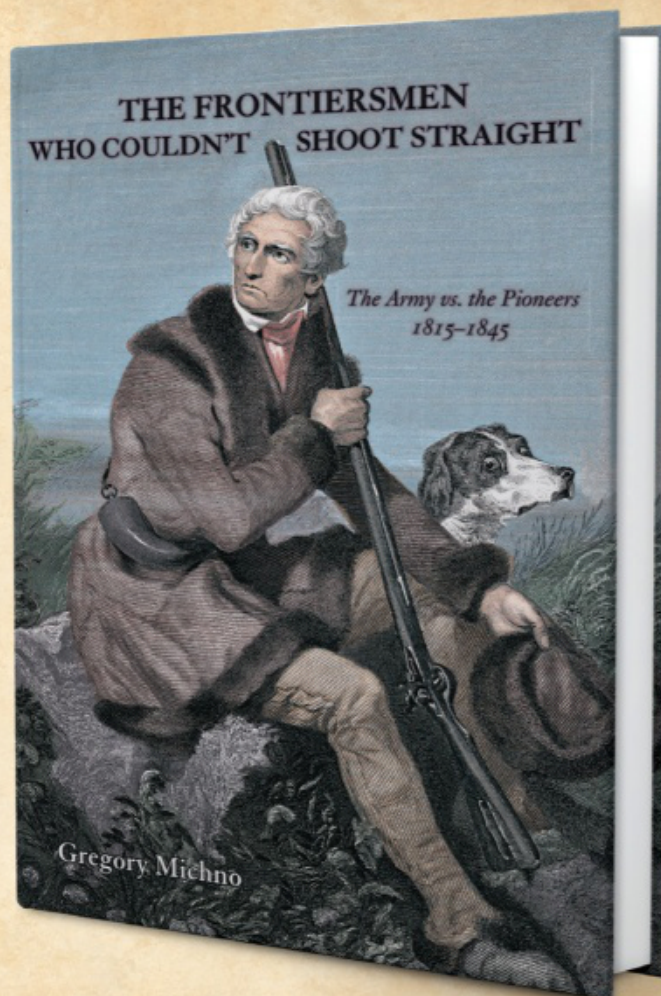
The Frontiersmen Who Couldn't Shoot Straight

The Army vs. the Pioneers 1815-1845

BY GREGORY MICHNO

GREGORY MICHNO herein offers powerful vignettes on citizen fraud and public wrongdoing through the decades of expansionism in the American West. It is at once a well-documented revelation on the fabled institutions that have invested common perceptions of our frontier past that every citizen should consider. Michno is an original thinker and one of our finest interpreters of western history, as this contribution well proves. — Jerome A. Greene, author of *January Moon: The Northern Cheyenne Breakout from Fort Robinson, 1878-1879*

GREGORY MICHNO ranks among the most original independent scholars at work today on Western history and the American experience in general. In this frequently disturbing book, he eviscerates the notion of American exceptionalism by deconstructing the myth of the frontiersman. The supposedly self-reliant pioneers who facilitated civilization's advance into the wilderness whined endlessly for government support and protection, and then turned on that helping hand whenever it attempted to curb their incessant efforts to defraud, dispossess, and slaughter their Indian neighbors. Michno pulls no punches in this scathing and well researched indictment, demonstrating that the worst aspects of contemporary culture have dealt in Americans' hearts since the birth of the republic. — Gregory J.W. Urwin, Temple University



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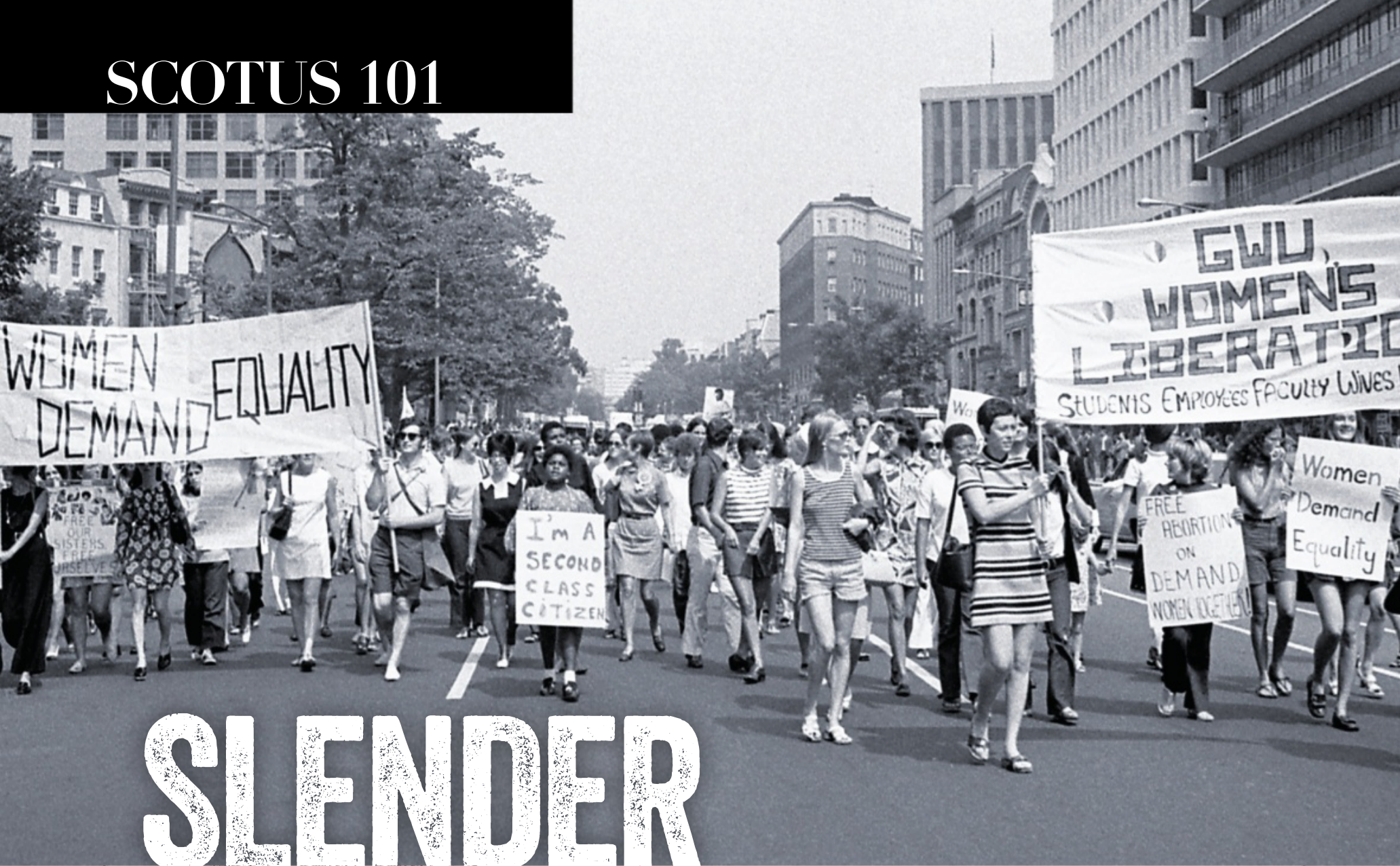
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ANSWER: TWO PAIR (ACES AND EIGHTS). GUNNED DOWN WHILE PLAYING FIVE-CARD STUD IN A DEADWOOD SALOON BY JACK MCCALL, HICKOK WAS HOLDING BLACK ACES AND BLACK EIGHTS AS HIS "UP CARDS", THE IDENTITY OF THE FIFTH CARD, THE "HOLE CARD" IS THE SUBJECT OF DEBATE. THE HAND BECAME KNOWN AS "DEADMAN'S HAND".



SLENDER REED

BY DANIEL B. MOSKOWITZ

Personally Political
Reed embodied the central issue raised by the women's liberation movement.

REED V. REED
404 U.S. 71 (1971)
LAWS THAT TREAT
MEN AND WOMEN
DISSIMILARLY
VIOLATE THE 14TH
AMENDMENT'S
EQUAL
PROTECTION
CLAUSE.

Besides establishing national legal standards, most landmark Supreme Court decisions settle matters of vital importance to litigants: whether someone lives or dies, the fate of a lost job, who can marry whom. But in *Reed v. Reed* the stakes were so slight that Justice Harry Blackmun, in the memo he routinely wrote in preparation for hearing oral arguments, called the matter “much ado about nothing.”

Those October 1971 arguments hung on a struggle between Sally and Cecil Reed of Boise, Idaho. The Reeds, who had divorced, disputed who should oversee distribution of a few possessions—including a clarinet, books and LPs, and \$495 in a college savings account—their adopted son, Skip, 16, left in 1967 when he killed himself with his father's gun in his father's basement. A lower court made Cecil Reed executor. Sally Reed's objection to that led to the U.S. Supreme Court for the first time finding unconstitutional a law that treated men and women differently. With its ruling in *Reed*, the Court

overturned millennia of judicial holdings based on assumptions that men and women had inherently different roles in society.

Probate found Sally Reed to be as competent as Cecil to be Skip's executor. But an Idaho statute specifically said that in such matters “males must be preferred to females.” At that time, many laws differentiated between men and women. These statutes, seldom contested, had always been upheld. Only 10 years before the Reed case, the High Court unanimously OK'd a Florida law that automatically put men on jury rolls but included only those women who asked to be there. (Virtually none did.)

Gender distinctions were ingrained in American jurisprudence; Sally Reed had trouble finding anyone to litigate her attack. Sixteen Boise attorneys rebuffed her before Allen Derr took her case. Derr also thought her claim hopeless but believed the Idaho law unconstitutional and worthy of challenge. (Derr's mother, in 1937, was the first woman to serve in

the Idaho Senate.) In an Idaho district court, Derr argued that the rationale offered for preferring men as executors—that men “have a better head for business than women”—was so unattached to evidence as to violate the 14th Amendment guarantee that all have “equal protection of the laws.” To virtually unanimous surprise, the judge hearing the case, Charles R. Donaldson, agreed with Derr. “The Court can see no reasonable basis for the classification which gives preference of males over females,” Donaldson wrote in his 1968 decision.

Sally Reed’s victory was as short-lived as it was startling. Cecil Reed appealed to the Idaho Supreme Court. In 1970, that body ruled. Donaldson, now on the state’s highest court, could not review his own opinion. It was a galling moment when all five of his colleagues on the tribunal called the preference for males valid.

Sally Reed wanted to fight on. At that time, the U.S. Supreme Court had to accept any appeal of a state high court decision upholding a state statute challenged as a violation of the U.S. Constitution. [Congress eliminated “mandatory jurisdiction” in 1988.] Derr, with limited resources, accepted a deal from the American Civil Liberties Union: he would present the oral argument to the High Court, but the ACLU would prepare Sally Reed’s written brief. That task primarily went to Rutgers Law School professor Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who in 1993 herself joined the Court.

Ginsburg’s 68-page brief became the template for challenges to laws making gender distinctions. “American women have been stigmatized historically as an inferior class and are today subject to pervasive discrimination,” Ginsburg wrote. She said laws treating men and women differently ought to be judged like laws making race-based distinctions—held to “strict scrutiny,” allowed to stand only for a “compelling” reason.

Ginsburg was tapping into the truth that the times were changing. Congress had passed the Equal Pay Act and banned sex discrimination in employment. The year before the *Reed* argument, 50,000 women had marched in Manhattan demanding equal rights, echoed by sister demonstrations in Los Angeles, Detroit, and Washington, DC. The legal world was beginning to see that existing gender distinctions were not rational. The Association of American Law Schools warned that institutions refusing to admit women stood to lose accreditation; prestigious law schools refused to let law firms recruit if they declined to hire female lawyers. And a few judges, like Donaldson, were refusing to adhere to let-different-treatment-stand precedent. Five months before *Reed* was argued at the U.S. Supreme Court, the California Supreme Court unanimously invalidated a state statute barring women from tending bar unless they or their spouses owned the establishment.

The *Reed* case’s very insignificance offered the justices a way to recognize that legal gender distinctions could be unconstitutional without ruffling many feathers. Ordering a military academy to accept female students or empowering women to compete for jobs heretofore reserved for men could have stirred widespread public resistance, whereas in *Reed* literally nothing was at stake. Before the High Court could hear the case,

Idaho repealed its male preference provision. And to make sure the court’s ruling, while unanimous, created a minimum of ripples, Chief Justice Warren Burger assigned himself to write the decision.

Burger produced a brief opinion, passionless and narrow, not specifically overturning any precedent and refusing Ginsburg’s request to declare laws discriminating on the basis of sex be considered valid only if compelling logic dictated differential treatment. Burger instead emphasized that “this Court has consistently recognized that the Fourteenth Amendment does not deny to States the power to treat different classes of persons in different ways,” adding that “a classification must be reasonable, not arbitrary.” The Idaho executor law violated the guarantee of equal protection because that statute differentiated “on the basis of criteria wholly unrelated to the objective of that statute,” Burger wrote.

But even that deliberately limited measure of unconstitutionality had huge impact, given the previous anything-goes approach to gender differentiation. “In the wake of *Reed*, hundreds of laws, state and federal, were changed,” Ginsburg recalled 40 years later. “Congress went through all of the provisions of the U.S. Code and changed almost all that classified overtly on the basis of gender.”

And justices themselves began to see as unjust gender distinctions predecessors condoned. Three years after *Reed*, the Court held unconstitutional a Louisiana provision that the only women to serve on juries were those who had submitted written notice expressing a wish to do so. The Court followed that ruling three months later with a finding that it was unconstitutional for Utah to consider men minors until age 21 but treating women as adults at 18. In 1976 the Court ruled that Oklahoma was denying equal protection by allowing bars to sell women over 18 3.2 percent beer while male customers had to be at least 21.

In the near-beer case, the justices ruled that a law discriminating on gender grounds no longer could be defended just by showing its aim had a rational link. The new test: “Classification by gender must serve important government objectives and must be substantially related to achievement of those objectives.” ★



Change Maker

In arguing Reed’s case, Ruth Bader Ginsburg was tapping into the truth that the times were changing.

Ascetic Advocate

Bergh traded not in sentiment but in rational response to cruel irrationality inflicted on animals by other human beings.

child protection organization into being.

Others had preceded Bergh in animal activism. In colonial times, the Puritans outlawed cruelty to beasts, to the point of sometimes assigning individual creatures agency, as when communities put animals on trial, prosecuting a pig that had run amok in a town or sparrows that had eaten seed stocks. The early republic's first state law protecting animals, an 1828 New York statute, set a pattern, emphasizing safeguards on animals as property. Bergh took a different path, founding a movement to protect animals from cruelty based on a moral imperative to spare them suffering. Traveling in Spain he had been particularly disgusted by bullfighting. In Russia, where he briefly served as a diplomat during the Civil War, mistreatment of horses distressed him. En route stateside after his tour in Russia, he stopped in London, where he met with the president of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, an organization established in 1824.

Bergh resumed life in New York. In April 1866 he enlisted friends and community notables to join him in establishing the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, whose "Declaration of the Rights of Animals" he wrote. The New York legislature granted the group a charter; members included fellow swells J.J. Astor, Peter Cooper, John Van Buren, Hamilton Fish, and others. Within a year, New York legislators had passed an expansive law addressing maltreatment—including abandonment, maiming, and starvation—of not just work animals, but all living creatures held captive.

ASPCA agents were deputized to arrest violators, and Bergh was known personally to disrupt a beating being given a sick or disabled horse—and to turn his wrath on the driver. He had no shortage of occasions for intervention. In mid-1800s New York City, horses outnumbered residents, and under urban strain the bonds that had enforced kindness to animals in rural America lost their hold. Besides battling the widespread abuse of horses by street-car operators, Bergh also fought for humane methods of slaughtering cattle and hogs. He harried impresarios of dog and cock fighting, which though banned still were prevalent. He brought public attention to needless cruelty inflicted on commoditized animals, from turtles to chickens and calves, being shipped alive

ANIMAL ALLY

BY SARAH RICHARDSON

Crashing through a skylight into a Manhattan saloon to break up a dog fight in December 1866 was only one of Henry Bergh's more memorable exploits as a pioneering animal-rights provocateur. "Mr. Bergh's figure was of course a very familiar one about the city. His appearance was striking," a newspaper reported. "His face was long and thin, much resembling the picture of Don Quixote, with sunken eyes and prominent cheekbones. His attire was always faultlessly neat." A shipbuilder's son, Bergh grew up with wealth. He came to his cause in mid-life after failing as a playwright. Being a meat-eating, fur-wearing worldly New Yorker with neither pets nor children did not deter him from campaigning against cruelty to animals, a crusade that helped bring the first American

to market. He devised a sling in which to transport disabled horses. He persuaded New York City officialdom to install fountains for watering horses.

Epithets rained on Bergh by commentators ranged from “Angel with a Top Hat” to “The Great Meddler” and “An Ass That Needs His Ears Cropped.” He knew his place. “[My] practice, and recommendation,” he told a Philadelphia colleague, “is to keep agitating; and keep continually in the newspapers with our cause.”

Early on, Bergh tangled with P.T. Barnum, calling out the showman for the cruelty his performances inflicted on animals. Eventually the two became friends; Barnum advised Bergh to buff his brand. Bergh also agitated for food safety, helping to shame and prosecute sellers of tainted milk from weak, diseased cows held in horrible conditions and fed not grain and grass but distilleries’ used grain waste.

Despite his robust activism—he was 53 when he crashed through that saloon skylight—Bergh was the antithesis of the warm, fuzzy do-gooder. “He did not love horses; he disliked dogs. He was a healthy, clean-living man, whose perfect self-control showed steady nerves that did not shrink sickeningly from sights of physical pain,” a biographer wrote in 1902. “No warm, loving, tender, nervous nature could have borne to face it for an hour, and he faced and fought it for a lifetime. His coldness was his armor, and its protection was sorely needed.” Bergh’s ardor, however, matched his background. His wealthy father was said to have paid black and white workers the same wages, and the son had supported the ending of slavery. The formal establishment of civil rights for blacks, elevating them from the animalistic status slavery had assigned them, may have fired his passion for creatures’ welfare. The rise of post-war industrial America aroused in him concerns about the treatment of animals in commerce.

In 1874, a Methodist case worker in midtown Manhattan alerted Bergh to a helpless “creature/animal” she said was being abused. Bergh promised to help, whereupon his informant identified the “creature” as a



Transcending His Times

The snark that once greeted Bergh’s activism, below, eventually faded from fashion, but society came to embrace and honor his kindness to all his fellow creatures.

young girl she had heard about from the landlord of the building where the child lived. The case worker had brought the matter to the police and a lawyer; in neither arena did she find any willingness to help. Bergh’s lawyer, Elbridge Gerry, obtained testimony from the child and her neighbors. “The child is an animal,” Bergh told officials. “If there is no justice for it as a human being, it shall at least have the rights of the cur in the street.” City authorities removed the girl from the premises and prosecuted the abusive guardian, who went to prison. The following year Bergh and Gerry formed the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the world’s first child protective agency. Bergh amplified his message far beyond New York on lecture tours, and to broaden the ASPCA’s membership and power he invited women into the society.

Living his motto—“Mercy to animals means mercy to mankind.”—Bergh pressed his cause without relent. “Day after day...I am in slaughterhouses, or lying in wait at midnight with a squad of police near some dog pit; through the filthy markets and about the rotten docks,” Bergh wrote, Andrew Robichaud noted in his 2019 book, *Animal City: The Domestication of America*. “Out into the crowded and dangerous streets; lifting a fallen horse to his feet, and perhaps sending the driver before a magistrate; penetrating dark and unwholesome building where I inspect collars and saddles for raw flesh; then lecturing in public schools to children, and again to adult Societies. Thus my whole life is spent.”

Upon Henry Bergh’s death in 1888, poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, in a eulogy, quoted an 1872 poem of his about the man: “The man I honor and revere/Who without favor, without fear, In the great city dares to stand/The friend of every friendless beast...” ★

“So This

A young U.S. Marine Corps officer's diary of his
plunge from peacetime Hawaii into World War II
By Robert D. Taplett

F

ellow U.S. Marines and military historians know Colonel Robert D. Taplett best for his valor during the Korean War.

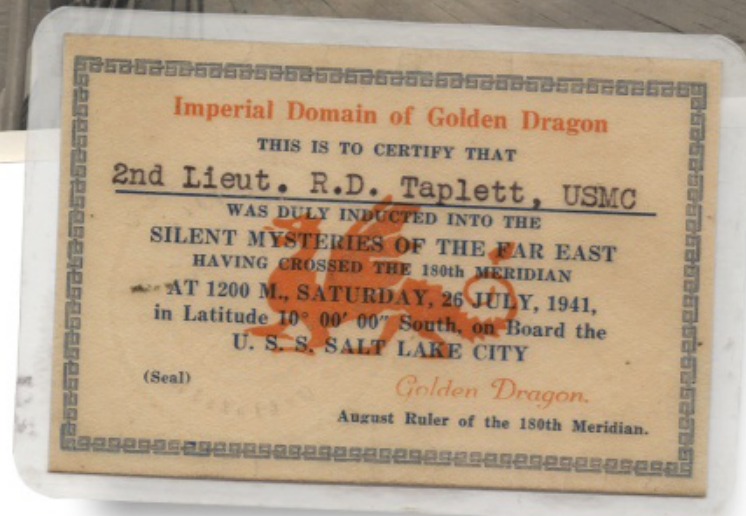
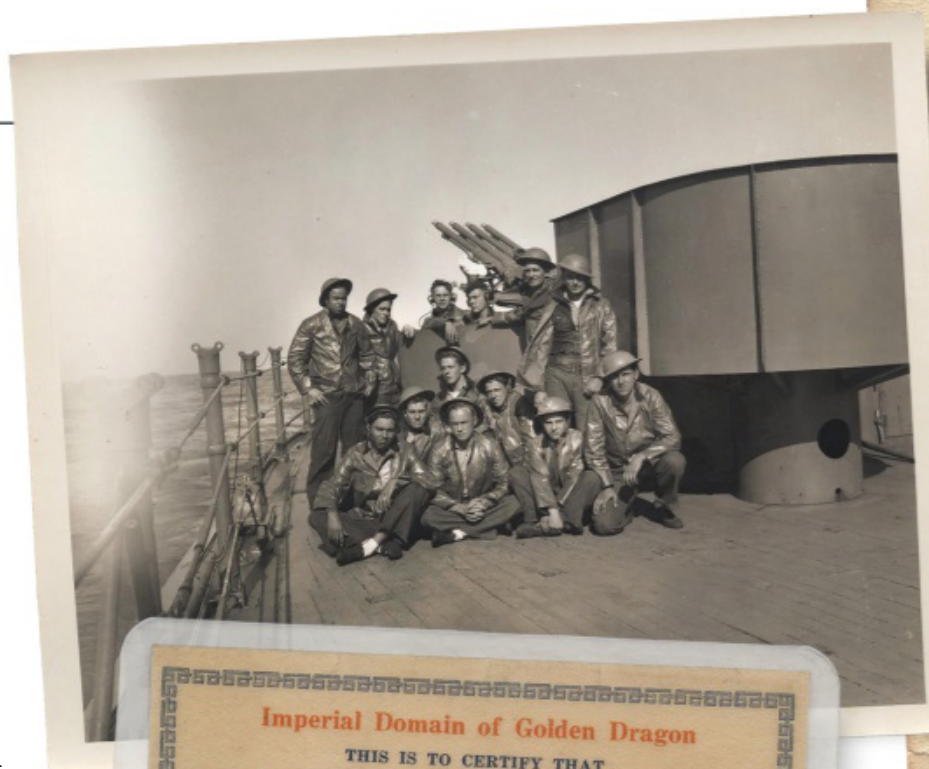
On September 15, 1950, Taplett, commanding the 3rd Battalion of the 5th Marine Regiment, led the initial landing of an amphibious assault at Inchon that resulted in victory for United Nations forces. Later that year, at the Chosin Reservoir, Taplett and the 3/5 Marines, often struggling against temperatures of -40°, fought nearly constantly for three weeks to keep open a road to the sea that 18,000 American personnel needed to execute a fighting withdrawal from a pursuing Chinese army of 120,000.

Taplett's exploits in Korea came to overshadow his World War II service. As a neophyte gunnery officer, he sailed out of Pearl Harbor in late November 1941 aboard the heavy cruiser USS *Salt Lake City* in a task force accompanying aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise*, which was delivering warplanes to Wake Island; by happenstance the task force was not at Pearl on December 7, 1941. A few months later, Taplett and his Marine gunners, aboard *Salt Lake City*, sailed in another task force that accomplished the Doolittle Raid against Tokyo, Japan.

Born in 1918 in Tyndall, South Dakota, population 1,600, Robert Taplett attended the University of South Dakota, where he lettered in three sports. His football teammates included future fellow Marines John Ptak, Joe Trompeter, and Joe Foss, all of whom earned medals for valor during World War II. Upon graduating in 1940,

Taplett resigned his ROTC commission and joined the Marines. He trained at the Basic School at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, later relocated to Quantico, Virginia.

In June 1941, the Navy assigned 2nd Lieutenant Taplett to *Salt Lake City*, the navy's oldest commissioned vessel, nicknamed, invoking the Japanese for "ship," both "Sway-back Maru" and "Salty Maru." Taplett commanded the cruiser's Marine detachment and served as a gunnery officer. Captained by Commander Ellis Zacharias, *Salt Lake City*,



Is War!''



In Harm's Way

First Lieutenant Robert D. Taplett aboard the heavy cruiser USS Salt Lake City, certificate issued earlier marking his passage across the International Date Line, and Marines of the gun crew he led.

with the rest of the U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet, had taken up station in 1940 at Pearl Harbor, on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. Between June 1941, when he debarked west from California aboard seaplane tender USS *Curtiss*, and May 1942, when he was seeing combat in the Pacific, Robert Taplett kept a diary. His impressions of going to war appear here in print for the first time, edited for brevity and clarity.—*Michael Dolan*

June 15, 1941—Sailed from San Diego on USS *Curtiss*, about 90 passenger officers aboard. In the afternoon, we pulled into Long Beach. After a one-hour stop, we shoved off. In a few hours, the mainland faded. How long before I see it again?

June 16–21, 1941—At sea. An excellent trip and profitable from the poker standpoint.

June 22, 1941—Sailed into Pearl Harbor 9 a.m. The first view of the islands was impressive. There seems to be a constant rainbow.

June 23, 1941—Officers disembarked to their ships, except Cornell and myself. We were sent to the *Chester*, then the *San Francisco*. Took the pistol team ashore to fire.

June 25, 1941—Transferred to the *Indianapolis*; Walter Cornell also. Wonder where *Salt Lake City* is? And still no mail!

June 26, 1941—*Salt Lake City* is in. Reported on board to relieve Lieutenant Carl Larsen—a boy from South Dakota. Really a treat to talk to someone from your own state.



He's to leave Saturday on the [passenger liner] *Matsonia*—lucky stiff, going back to be married.

Monday, July 7, 1941—Diarrhea. Nearly everyone feeling awful.

July 9-15, 1941—Took sailors to the range for firing. Stood 2 watches. Rumors circulated like mad that shore liberties had been canceled—we were grouping to go someplace.

On Wednesday, July 16, 1941, *Salt Lake City* and *Northampton* departed Pearl Harbor for a 4,700-mile “familiarization cruise” to Brisbane, Australia. A Dutch-flagged freighter ferrying volunteer American aviators to fly in China for General Claire Chennault and the Flying Tigers joined the cruisers. En route there were frequent episodes of General Quarters, the summons to battle stations, and Condition III, a state of heightened alert. Taplett served as an advocate in courts martial and oversaw gunnery practice. Loading an antiaircraft gun, a Marine lost a fingertip. On Tuesday, August 5, 1941, the ships reached the mouth of the Brisbane River. Led by a pilot boat nine miles upstream through a heavily mined channel, the cruisers anchored at Brisbane for a five-day visit. Australians were happy to have American warships at hand; some asked Marines for autographs. Back at sea, Royal Australian Air Force pilots staged mock attacks on the ships. In such exercises, Taplett’s anti-aircraft gunners strove to qualify for a rating of “E” for expertise. At New Guinea and New Britain, he and shipmates saw their first volcanoes before turning home to Honolulu. Arriving at Pearl Harbor on August 25, Taplett found 50 letters, including several from the young woman he had been seeing before enlisting. Her name was June; he called her “Dune.” He replied to Dune and wrote to his younger brother Howard, known as “Dud,” who would follow him into the Marines and be wounded on Iwo Jima, and to their sisters Margie and Evelyn. Older brother John was serving in



the Navy. Taplett was assigned to coach *Salt Lake City*’s basketball team and to serve as assistant baseball officer. An entry about a bash for fellow Marines departing Hawaii for the mainland ends, “Don’t quite remember getting to bed.”

Monday, September 1, 1941—Spent an hour or so at the Club. Thrilling day—just a lonely guy. Maybe I ought to get a date. Slept & sunbathed. Saw a lousy movie. Read awhile, wrote to Dud. Wonder if Dune was teaching today.

Tuesday, September 2, 1941—Rumors that we will be headed for the coast. Hope so! Checked rifle & pistol qualifiers. Saw a wonderful movie, *That Hamilton Woman*. Was tempted to go to the Club but decided I’d better write letters and go to bed. The moon has been so pretty the last couple of nights! Would be perfect if we were sharing them, Dune.

Wednesday, September 3, 1941—Checked AA guns. Golfed at Oahu

Goodwill Mission

A prewar “familiarization” cruise took Taplett and his shipmates to islands in the South Pacific, top left, and an extended stop at Brisbane, Australia.

Country Club. Shot 103. What a view of Honolulu. Dinner alone, back in time to see *The Belle of New Orleans*. Captain & I went to the Club for drinks.

Thursday, September 4, 1941—Left Pearl Harbor to cruise and fire short range battery practice & AA. Quite a bit of the fleet is with us, including the *Enterprise*. Planes in the air almost constantly. You ought to see dive bomb runs. Practiced night submarine defense. Course took us through Molokai, Lanai, Maui, etc. What I couldn't do with one of these Hawaiian moons and Dune.

Friday September 5, 1941—Planes were on 30-second notice. I sure like to watch them leave the catapult. The flying bug is getting me. This afternoon, spotting drill. In the evening, a mock naval engagement against *Arizona*, *Enterprise*, & destroyers. The moon was almost as bright as daylight.

Saturday, September 6, 1941—Nothing like a shore duty Saturday. Machine guns fired, AA, battle practice. Check-sighted the aft machine guns. Only one hit. Very busy with drill, bringing up and checking over ammo for firing Monday. This evening we neared the harbor to taxi in a plane which my roomie had banged up landing today. Honolulu so pretty at dusk. Two more courts today. One is going to be terrible. Oh, well. I've got tomorrow to work on them.

Sunday, September 7, 1941—5" gun loading drill. In the afternoon and evening worked on courts. Went to bed early. Pooped.

Monday, September 8, 1941—Fired short range battle practice. Looks like I'll lose at least one keg of beer to my Marine gun crews as I'm sure they will get an E. Everything breakable removed but even so we shattered things. How these big babies shake the ship. Tonight: searchlight drill! Wrote to Dune and am going to work on the courts I have tomorrow.

September 9-11, 1941—Tuesday: Torpedo defense. At 2:30 our "not guilty" case met 'til 5 p.m., then adjourned. After dinner was settling down to work when General Quarters went. After it was over I hit the hay. Awoke early to the tune of flight quarters. Breakfast, drill call, and morning was over. Sounded torpedo defense in the afternoon & rehearsal runs. AA and battle practice. Secured at 4. Court 'til after 5, when we adjourned. It looks like we won't get a conviction. After General Quarters and about an hour of searchlight drill went back to work on the case. Spent most of the night with Captain Cobb who really knows his law. I

have two more courts. A-scurrying I went to dig up the accused and get matters straight. Flight Quarters for homeward-bound pilots at 12. At 12:20, Flight Quarters again—man the crash boats, rig for refueling, sound torpedo defense, almost simultaneously. Finally got to fire some guns. Ammo was 88% duds. By the time we retrieved firing sleeves, it was too dark to retrieve planes, so they had to return to Pearl. General Quarters. Oh, hell—I could have put in for shore duty.

Salt Lake City beat *Chester* at basketball 53-34. Coach Taplett joined the cruiser's captain for a Honolulu binge that ended just before the ship sailed for Long Beach, California, with its basketball coach down with measles.

Friday October 10, 1941—Back to work, woozy. Loafed & supervised.

Saturday October 11, 1941—Full power run. How the ol' bus did shake! Holiday routine in the afternoon. Able to pick up radio from the coast—listened to football games. Dance bands & good music, this is the way it should be! Still have the sore throat. Wish I were going on leave! Hope Dune comes out, but I'm doubtful—very.

Sunday, October 12, 1941—Supposed to anchor at midnight. Gives you a queer feeling to stand on the forecastle & know that in the dull glow in the sky lies good ol' Los Angeles & home.

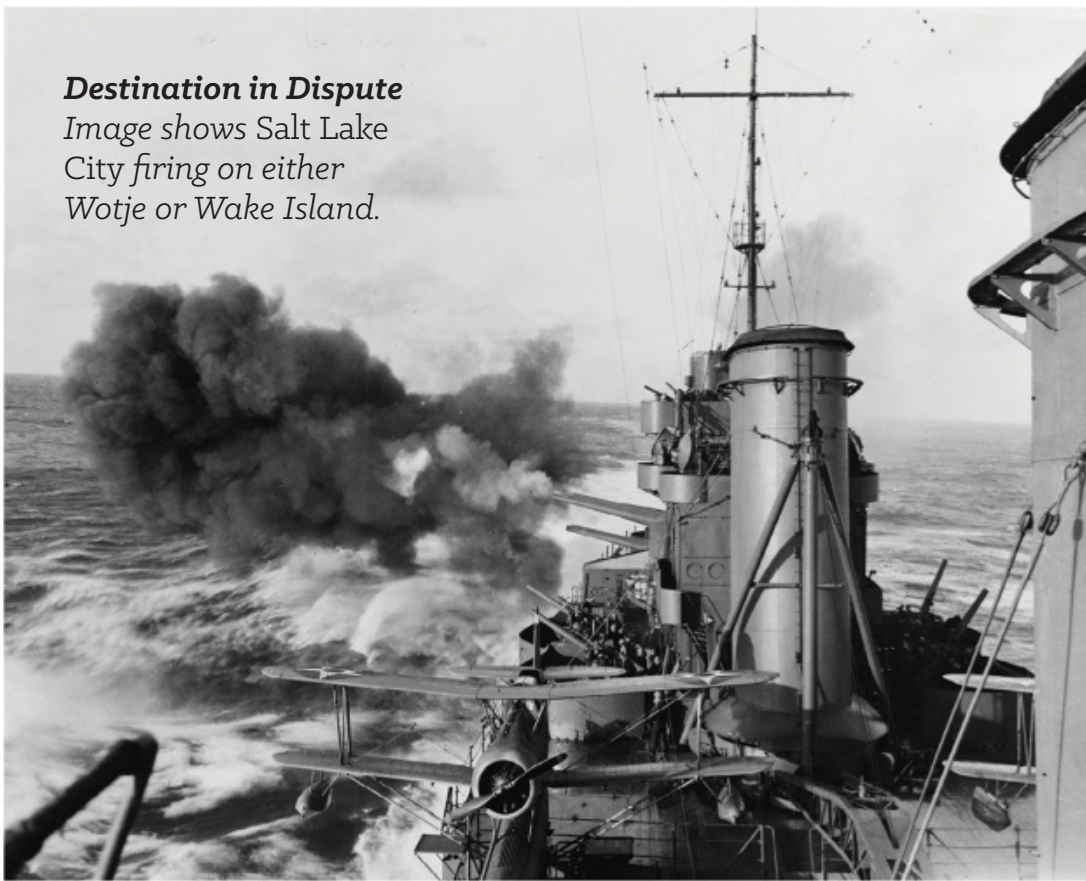
Undated—Leave canceled. Left Long Beach October 31, arrived Pearl November 7. Left Pearl November 9, back November 18 for yard work.

Tropical Paradise
Pre-attack Hawaii was an idyll of seaside dance pavilions and lounging topside aboard ship.



Destination in Dispute

Image shows Salt Lake City firing on either Wotje or Wake Island.



Salt Lake City and other warships were ordered to form a task force protecting aircraft carrier *USS Enterprise*, about to depart Pearl Harbor for an undisclosed location. Another carrier, *USS Lexington*, had left the anchorage earlier in similar circumstances.

Friday, November 28, 1941—Under way very early. Indications point to a journey to the Philippine Islands. We have orders to shoot on sight. I thought we were in a state of readiness before but nothing like this! Bombs for the planes, ready boxes full, guns ready to go. Everyone has that pre-game look.

Saturday, November 29, 1941—Condition III and General Quarters. Sleep is where you can find it! No dope as to our destination.

Sunday, November 30, 1941—We'll be lucky to mail Xmas cards. Glad Eve is doing my shopping, but I wonder what Dune will think.

Thursday, December 4, 1941—Mother's birthday. Looks as if we are headed for Pearl. Evidently, we got near Wake. I believe we left planes from *Enterprise* there. We didn't see the island—everything is shrouded in secrecy. We are still in Condition III and go to General Quarters at sunrise and sunset.

Friday, December 5, 1941—Blustery. General Quarters becoming tiresome. Sometimes Condition III takes on aspects of farce.

Friday, December 5, 1941—Crossed the date line, hence 2 Fridays. Weather still bad.

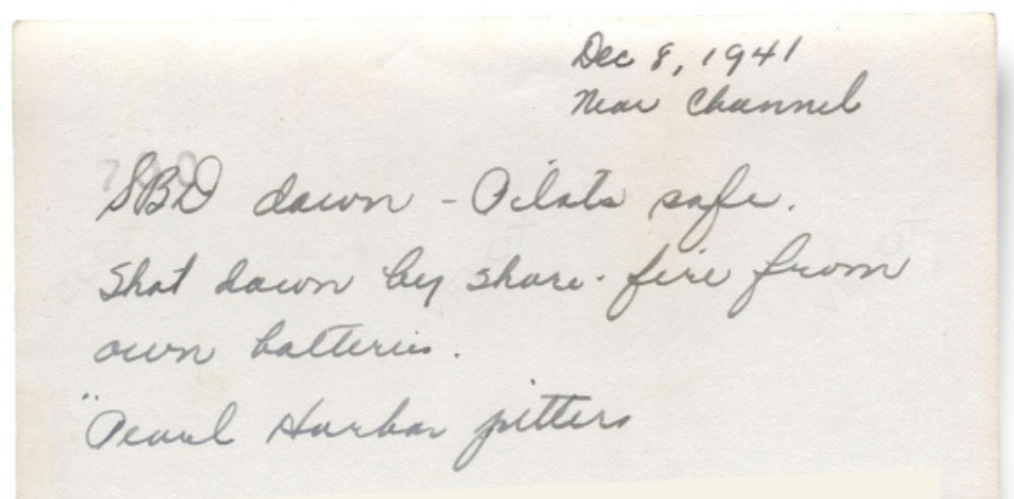
Saturday, December 6, 1941—Even rougher. Waves wash over the forecastle. Refueling tin cans [destroyers].

The *Lexington* task force, later revealed to have been delivering planes to Midway Island, was still a week out of port when the *Enterprise* task force arrived outside Pearl Harbor late on December 6.

Because the harbor's anti-submarine nets were obstructing access, the *Enterprise* task force sortied south into open seas.

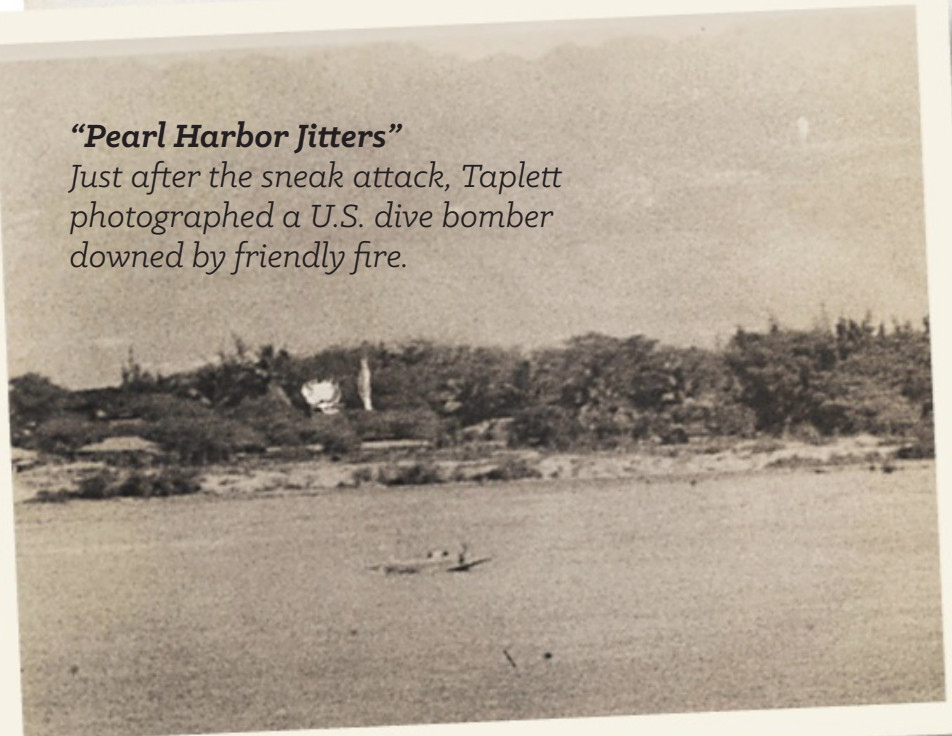
Sunday, December 7, 1941—At 9:30, I was on watch. Message came through: "AIR RAID ON OAHU—THIS IS NO DRILL." The rest of the day was rumor & reports. Tense and terrible, waiting waiting waiting. About 4 another alarm. Planes from the *Enterprise* close overhead, carrying torpedoes & bombs. A destroyer got a submarine off our port quarter. Task Force I joined us. Everyone clamoring for news, but all we could get was meager radio reports. Seems like a year transpired in those hours. Low on fuel.

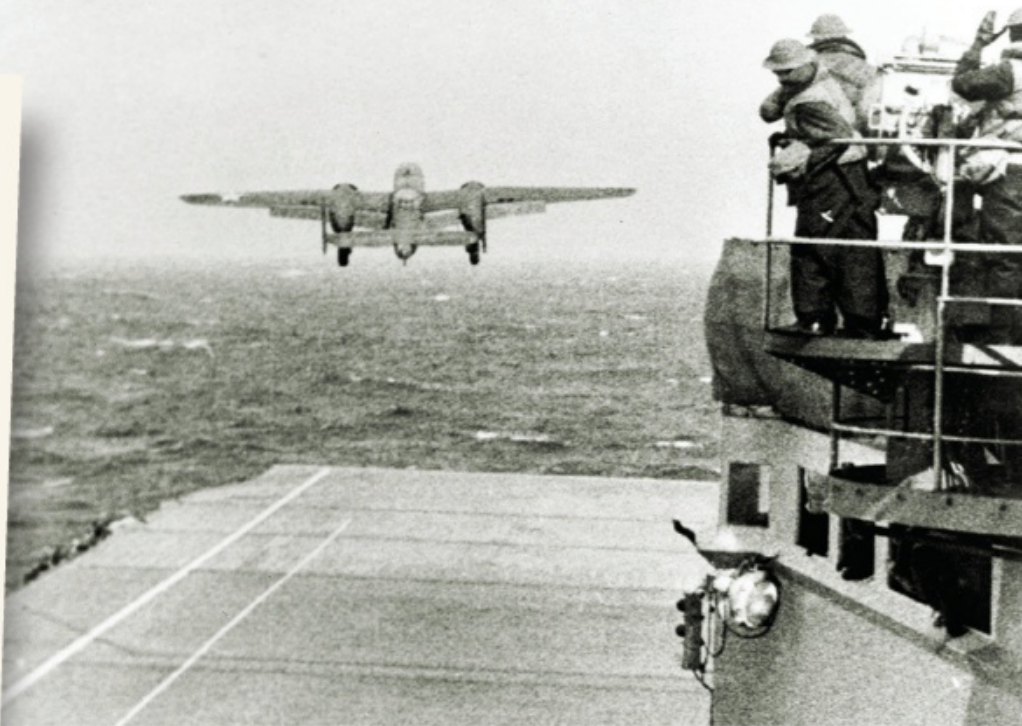
December 8, 1941—Fitful sleep. Destroyers got another sub. Proceeded to Pearl, cautiously. The first thing we saw was smoke from *Arizona*. One of our planes, shot down by our forces. *Nevada*, blown to hell. A sickening mess. Hickam Field, Ford Island, hangars in shreds, planes in smithereens. *Utah* bottom up, also *Oklahoma*, *West Virginia*. *Tennessee* was a wreck. Tenders, tankers—Lord, could this be possible! The Japs had Pearl Harbor memorized—even the berthing plan. Our Pacific Fleet consists of 1 battleship and a half dozen or so cruisers. We are sitting



"Pearl Harbor Jitters"

Just after the sneak attack, Taplett photographed a U.S. dive bomber downed by friendly fire.





wide open next to a tanker. Hope we move out tonight. Jap subs got into the harbor to sink battleships & a light cruiser. I hope & pray my classmates on board these vessels are safe. God give us courage and will to right this wrong.

Tuesday, December 9, 1941—The night was tense. Watch was a nightmare. All around reminders of destruction. *Arizona* still casting a sinister glow. Off our starboard lay *Utah*, bottom up. We took in provisions & stores. 100+ men reported, survivors from *Oklahoma*, *West Virginia*, etc. We went to General Quarters on a report that the Japs were attempting to land at Fort Weaver. Seemed like it took a year to refuel. Under way 4:30 a.m. I'll never forget that grim trip down the channel past torn ships and buildings. Most of us hadn't slept since Saturday night. By going to Condition III, some of us got about 6 hours of sleep. Jap planes must be operating from carriers. All we know is that we are on the defensive. Hell of a time for the country to say, "We are behind you to the finish." Why can't we see ahead? Admiral Yarnell has taken over.

Wednesday, December 10, 1941—What a day for a birthday! Torpedo defense. Fired our first shots of the war—3. Periscope appeared at about 2:30 and again at 5:45. We could feel depth charges. Wake, Guam still in our hands. We are learning fast, I hope! Our planes bombed 3 Jap subs, which crash-dived. I'm 23.

Thursday, December 11, 1941—From General Quarters in the morning 'til General Quarters at night we were reporting subs. Sighted periscopes and let go with the 5". Destroyers laid cans [depth charges, also known as ash cans]. Believe we got 3-4. One was seen to come up in two hulks. *Enterprise* planes claimed to have got 1 and damaged 4. The *Detroit* captured one—60

miles. They must have hundreds. Averaging about 18 hours a day on the guns.

Friday, December 12, 1941—Trouble with ammo on the forward battery—careless handling ruptured a case. Our planes went up for the first time since the war started. Sub scares. Destroyers dropped ash-cans.

Saturday, December 13, 1941—Mid-watch last night and the 1st day this afternoon. Didn't get much sleep. Tokyo press claims Japan bombed Pearl Harbor 6 times last Monday. Must have been some bombing, as we were refueling there that day. We again launched planes for patrol.

Sunday, December 14, 1941—Refueled & re-provisioned 3 destroyers. The sea is the roughest we've had. Refueling is tricky. A can [destroyer] bumped our starboard side. Darn chilly. We, the richest nation in the world, capable of anything, have ships whose AA protection consists of antiquated 5" guns. We give men rifles & machine guns & automatics to shoot at planes. I wonder what the people of the nation would say & think if they knew.

Monday, December 15, 1941—Rough seas. Weather terrible and without a moon it is worse. We are about 600 miles north of Oahu.

Tuesday, December 16, 1941—We were to go into Pearl but were delayed, evidently by a task force coming out that included *Lexington*. On our way in we saw B17Es, the newest Flying Fortresses, and the other side of Ford Island. *California*, *Oklahoma*, *West Virginia*, & *Arizona*. About 5 p.m. we tied up to a buoy. *Enterprise* followed us in, then *Chester* & *Northampton* and cans. *Louisville* tied up next to us. They had convoyed ships from the mainland. Everyone expected liberty but we are in Condition III—not to be caught flat-footed again. Martial law declared and prohibition is in effect; not much to go ashore for. Wrote home and to Mil. Hope we get mail tomorrow.

Wednesday, December 17, 1941—Another Jap sub got in. It was sunk. I wonder how many more are waiting. The 3rd section and married men got an 8-hour liberty. All came back with weird tales. Spent the morning censoring mail. Talk about filthy letters. Slept, then stood the first day watch. Got my birthday gift from home. Wonder how long it will be before the army gets the lead out of their pants. The Marines are proving to be real devil dogs at Wake Island. They were asked what they needed and they

Evening the Score

Colonel Jimmy Doolittle, left front, with Captain Marc Mitscher, led the attack on Tokyo from carrier *USS Hornet*, guarded by a task force including the cruiser *USS Salt Lake City*.



Comrades in Arms

Shipmate, right, holds a homemade fire bomb on Salt Lake City, whose 1944 rescue of men from USS Princeton reunited Taplett, left, and football teammate and fellow Marine Joe Trompeter.



came back with “Send us more Japs.” Took on provisions, better than 60 tons—twice as much as usual. Replenished ammo—400 rounds to replace drill & target stuff. Looks like *Texas*, *Pennsylvania*, and *Maryland* will soon be back in shape.

Thursday, December 18, 1941—4-8 a.m. watch and for the first time in 21 days went ashore on liberty. Stopped at the Club to pay my bill. Everything serious & businesslike. No liquor & no drinking. Saw the captured Jap sub. It seems unreal that 2 men could live in it. Talked to Swede Larsen, learned that 2 classmates were killed. Cy, on *Arizona*, caught a burst of machine gun bullets at the top of a ladder. Gavin, on *Oklahoma*, is missing. Poor fellows didn’t have a chance. Everywhere soldiers, sailors & Marines with guns. The yard juts with gun emplacements. Windows painted black & signs reading “Business as usual.” Went to a movie, shopped, had dinner, came back 2 hours before liberty was up. Had a terrific headache. Took 3 aspirin & went to bed.

Friday, December 19, 1941—Under way very unexpectedly. We’re headed for the South Seas and trouble. Condition III in day time and General Quarters at sunrise & sunset, meaning sleep when you can.

Saturday, December 20, 1941—*Enterprise* planes all in the air. Saw a beautiful job of night flying. A plane was lost for a couple hours. When we saw him make it safe, fellows on deck cheered. Most everyone is anxiously expecting contact with the enemy.

Sunday, December 21, 1941—Sunny & warm. Tried to write *Dune* but can’t. Tried to sleep, gave up, went into the bunk room to play records. After lunch loading drill. Getting ready to go on watch.

Wednesday, December 24, 1941—No Xmas feeling. Stood watches most of the day. Spent Xmas Eve standing watch at the guns in a downpour.

Home seems so far away. Sometimes this all seems like a dream.

Thursday, December 25, 1941—Felt like it would snow. We are north and west of Midway, crossing & recrossing the date line. We’ve had Xmas 5-6 times. Watch in the rain 9:30, off at 12:45. Had lunch, played pinochle. Slept about an hour, watch 4-6 p.m. Xmas dinner. Captain Zacharias held everyone’s attention telling of his prediction of the disaster at Pearl Harbor. Went to bed at 9:45, up at 11:30 & on watch till 8 a.m. Some Xmas.

Friday, December 26, 1941—Off watch 8 a.m. Breakfast, pinochle, aired bedding, laundry inspection. 27th day at sea in 29 days. Rolling, rocking December, eh? **Sunday, December 28, 1941**—4th week of the war. Seems like it’s been a year. Japs still on the offensive. Felt good in the sun. Headed for Pearl. Supposed to be in on the 31 of December. I’ll be really looking for mail.

December 30-31, 1941—Arrived Pearl for yard work. *Tennessee* & *Maryland* gone—to the states, I presume.

In early January 1942, *Salt Lake City* underwent an overhaul that included fresh paint and installation of radar, 40mm Oerlikon AA gun mounts, and banks of 1.1” anti-aircraft machine guns, commonly called pom-poms. Taplett and his gunners had to retrain. Officers were ordered to ship home civilian clothes and dress uniforms. Pearl Harbor remained on edge. False alarms abounded. At Admiral William Halsey’s order, *Salt Lake City* sailed as part of a task force, refueling at sea from a tanker. Also aboard was *Life Magazine* photographer Bob Landry. “I’ve seen enough Hawaii,” Taplett wrote. “Nothing to do & too little time in which to do it.” He speculated on rumored plans for an attack on a Japanese submarine base. “They won’t disclose location, course, nothing. We probably won’t hear ’til the last minute and then have to prepare hastily,” he wrote. “I am finding it harder each day to keep up interest in this war.” *Salt Lake City* figured in a *March of Time* newsreel about Wake Island, to which *Enterprise* had delivered a dozen pilots and aircraft just before the Japanese attack there. “Our task force brought those 12 planes. Odd to think now that we were taking 12 men to sure death,” Taplett wrote. “December 10-20 we were in the vicinity, prepared to evacuate, but ran. Maybe there were good reasons but dammit why wasn’t the Navy prepared? The Navy says they

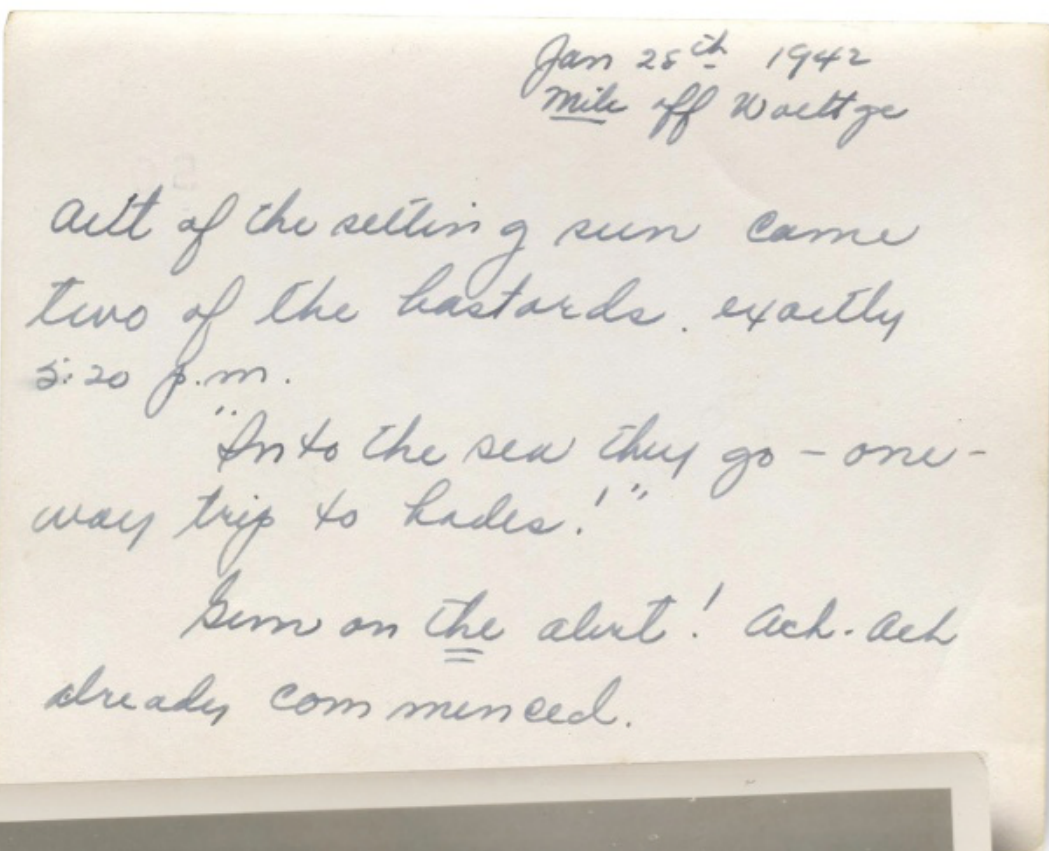
can't risk us as we ARE the Pacific Fleet."

Gunner Clarence Frederick Tyler, killed in an accident in an 8" gun turret, was buried at sea. A torpedo plane missed a landing on *Enterprise* and went into the ocean. Another plane crashed near the cruiser. One man drowned. The task force reached what appeared to be Samoa.

Tuesday, January 20, 1942—Beautiful sunrise. Even Landry was up to take pictures. Sunsets are honeys also. 2 of our aircraft flew patrol. *Enterprise* seemed to have more planes in the air. Breaking in reserve AA crews from the turrets. My General Quarters station moved to the after pom-poms, but I still stand Condition Watches on the 5" guns. Brad failed to return. He was in a rain-storm at 11,000 feet. His gas gave out around 8:15 p.m. Such a fine guy.

Wednesday, January 21, 1942—A plane from *Enterprise* spotted Brad and we picked him up, plane intact. I understand we are to assure disembarkation of 8,000 Marines from the *Lurline*, *Mariposa*, & *Monterey* [passenger liners]. Crawley came back. He was at Samoa. *Saratoga* torpedoed off Oahu. Flooded 3 boiler rooms but she got back to Pearl.

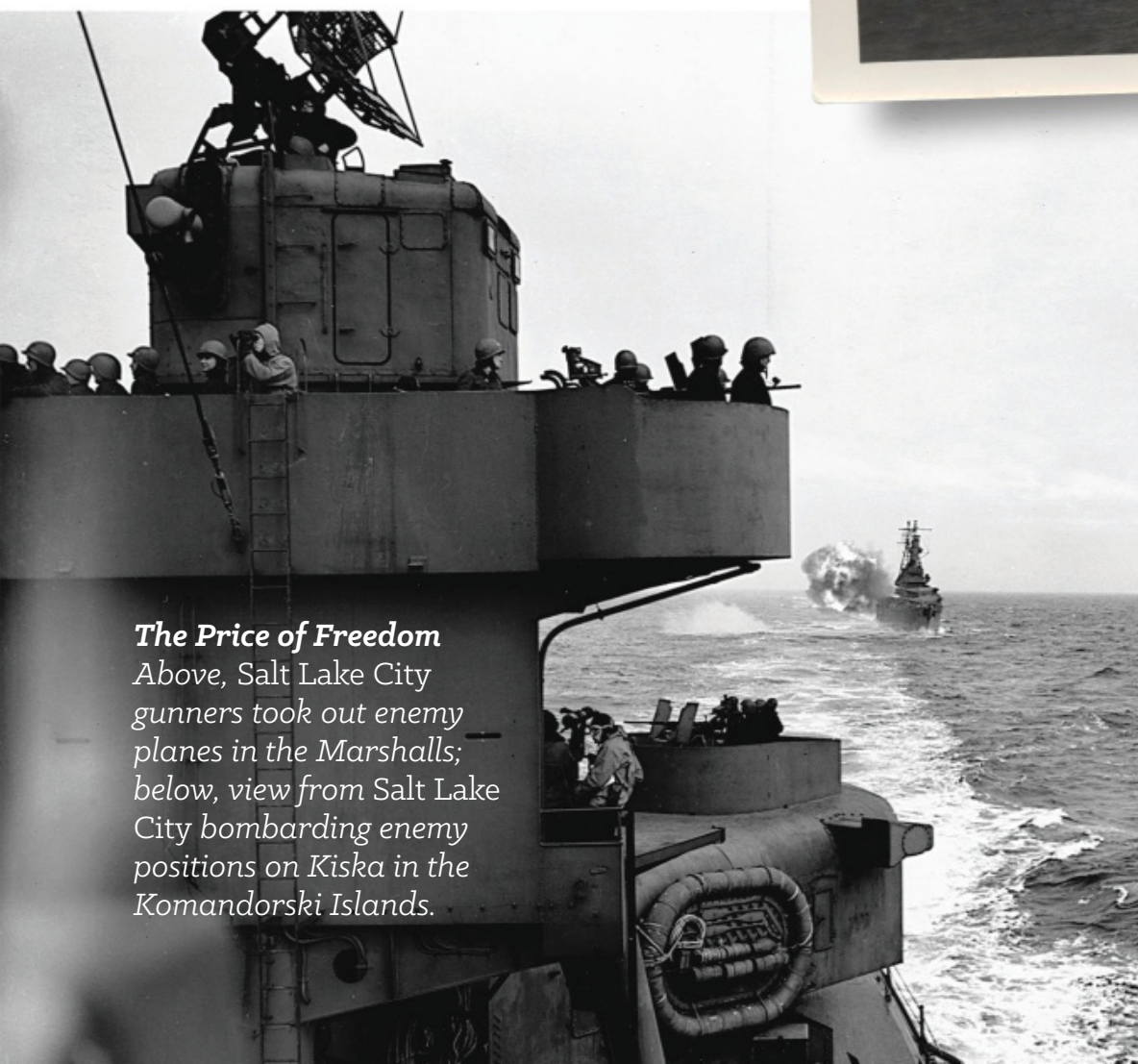
Thursday, January 22, 1942—Still in the Samoan Islands. May be weeks before we get to Pearl. Maybe we'll hit something on the way. Good source says it will be Jaluit (Marshall Islands), where there's a Japanese fleet. Learning semaphore, slowly! Condition watches getting more wearisome.



Friday, January 23—Mid-to-8 a.m. watch. Had an alarm & all battle stations were manned completely in 2 mins—some sort of record, as most off watches were in their bunks.

Saturday, January 24—The Captain spoke to us. He said our mission at Samoa is done and we are to attack Japanese forces in another area. Hope we give those slant-eyes a taste of their own medicine! Four destroyers in the Asiatic Fleet made a successful night attack on a Japanese fleet. Sank 1 big ship, blew up another and another had a bad list. One hit sustained by our destroyer—only 4 injured. No letup in hot weather, rainstorms. The report of the inquiry at Pearl Harbor was made public. Someone should fry. Everyone itching for a fight.

Wednesday, January 28, 1942—Stood my first watch in the director in Sky Forward [gunnery



The Price of Freedom

Above, Salt Lake City gunners took out enemy planes in the Marshalls; below, view from Salt Lake City bombarding enemy positions on Kiska in the Komandorski Islands.

Action in the South Pacific
Salt Lake City was in on the
attack on Japanese forces at
Wotje in the Marshall Islands.



control]. The task force commenced fueling. We fueled 2 destroyers, refueled from the *Platt*. Launched 2 planes. Battle of the Macassar Straits still in its fury. Looks like our forces are doing well. Claim 60+ enemy ships. The damn Limeys still withdrawing in Malaya. *Enterprise* completed fueling 2 a.m. On our way.

Thursday, January 29, 1942—Crossed date line so it becomes: Friday, January 30, 1942. Planes launched yesterday stayed overnight on *Chester* & *Northampton*. We seem to be headed for Jaluit [in the Marshall Islands]. The Captain spoke to the ship. If air bombardment is successful we will do shore bombardment. May be fighting off enemy planes. “Dress rehearsal” this afternoon. Those ol’ pom-poms better do their stuff. God, help us be successful! Started on investigation today of the junior officer laundry racket. It looks bad for somebody.

Saturday, January 30, 1942—Task force split up. *Northampton* and one destroyer stayed with us. *Chester* and 4 cans, *Enterprise* and several cans composed two other groups. Ship cleared for firing. Had the mid-to General Quarters watch, long day.

Sunday, January 31, 1942—General Quarters 0545, Flight Quarters 0615. Planes bombed Wotje 0658-0714. *Salty Maru* is now officially in this war! We opened fire at 0715. Bombardment lasted ’til 0945. Damage was heavy: 6 ships—armed merchantmen, oil tankers—radio towers & communications, docks & warehouses, storage, barracks, airfield, etc. All planes returned at 1115. Lost one plane on recovery—“Hard Luck” Brad. Destroyer picked them up, but plane was lost. At 1325 enemy planes attempted to bomb *Enterprise*. Several hits close aboard to *Enterprise*. 4 twin-engine bombers shot down. We accounted for at least one. Around 1530 two bombers, same type, at high altitude. AA kept them high. One burst scored & down came a plane. General Quarters all night, radar contacts, but storm clouds & bad weather allied with us. Most AA personnel spent 36 hours almost uninterrupted at their guns. No casualties, only a ruptured barrel on No. 8 5” gun. First known casualty was an enemy auxiliary vessel sunk by a destroyer to our stern. Admiral Halsey sent a dispatch: “Well done. You have made History in the Marshall Islands, I am proud to have you in my command. God bless you.”

February 5-11, 1942—In port. 5 new officers on board. One is an aviator

from North Dakota. Taking on ammunition and provisions. These poor lads get hell worked out of them. Busy as hell. Standing watches & liberty twice. Sent Mom a luncheon set & necklace & bracelet.

Wednesday, February 11—Rumors running wild, talk of heading to the States, etc. Went for a flight with Lon and saw Pearl Harbor from the air, quite a sight. Got down in time for lunch. Censored mail. Wrote home and mailed package to Mom & Mil. We were to get under way tomorrow but again, canceled!

February 15-23, 1942—Under way. Learned where we’re headed. Watches & gunnery drills. Practice firing 1.1’s. Trouble with fire control.

On February 23-24, 1942, the task force attacked Wake Island. Bombers from *Enterprise* were late arriving. Taplett saw American fighters down a four-engine enemy bomber: “He hit with a big splash & left a beautiful trail of smoke.” *Salt Lake City* launched and retrieved float planes. “*Enterprise* beat it & we were left to fend,” Taplett wrote. “A four-engine Jap naval patrol plane began shadowing us, out of range. 4:30 two twin-engine bombers appeared high overhead. We cut loose. Looked like they couldn’t miss. Hard right rudder and the bomb smashed close aboard starboard, abeam of us on the stern. 4 salvos hit the 2nd plane.”

Wednesday, February 25, 1942—Relaxed around noon. Slept, unloaded the 1.1s & sent ammo below. So this is war!

Thursday, February 26, 1942—On our way, supposedly Marcus Island—too near Japan & big air base! Rejoined tanker, caught up with *Enterprise*. Ran into fog and bad weather. Watches are wet, cold and miserable.

Saturday, February 28, 1942—General Quarters 3:30 p.m.: sub scare. After 20 minutes, we secured. Weather winterish. Captain spoke to the crew and said our return to Pearl would be delayed. Looks like we’ll get closer to Japan proper. May see lots of air action. Still cold, wet & foggy. Feels good, though. Radio Tokyo admitted the raid on Wake but claimed to have sunk one of our cruisers & damaged another. Wonder where. They did come close—too close!

Monday, March 2, 1942—On our way to Marcus. *Enterprise* planes to raid, we are along to protect. Destroyers departed with the tankers, so now there are just we three.

Tuesday, March 3, 1942—Much clearer. Made

out income tax and slept. Loafed 4-6.

Wednesday, March 4, 1942—Japan claims to have shot down 7 planes at Marcus. I saw all return but 1.

Thursday, March 5, 1942—Joined tankers. We are to remain at sea. Something's up.

Friday, March 6, Friday—Again crossed the meridian—2 Fridays. New pay bill in Congress—sounds good!

March 11–25—In Pearl Harbor. Liberty, etc.

March 16–21, 1942—Machine gun school 20mm.

March 25–28, 1942—At sea. Practice firing AA. Drone torpedo & high-level attacks. 2 drones shot down.

March 28, 1942—Into port. *Lexington*, *Indianapolis*, *San Francisco*, *Minneapolis*, *Louisville* came in the 26th. Raised hell at Rabaul. Claim 26 ships & 18+ bombers. Heard Mike Barrett was on the *Houston*, sunk early in March.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had decided in secret to retaliate for Pearl Harbor with a surprise attack on Tokyo. For months U.S. Army Air Force bomber pilots led by Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle had been training in Florida, learning to take off in heavily loaded Mitchell B-25s from runways shortened to simulate an aircraft carrier deck. In April 1942, USS *Hornet* became the hub of a task force setting forth to even the score with Japan. That task force included *Salt Lake City*.

Wednesday, April 8, 1942—Under way, same task group as before. Wonder where to. Casey [journalist Robert Casey of the *Chicago Daily News*] and Commander John Ford [the Hollywood director] aboard. Tested short range guns. Slept. Brought machine gun logs up to date. Still no mail. Course 2450. General Quarters 4:40.

Sunday, April 9, 1942—Splendid night's sleep for a change. Gunnery drill, stood watch. Brewer gave me a job: qualify 157+ men with the pistol. Bataan surrendered. Rumored English lost 2 cruisers and a carrier in the Bay of Bengal. 8-12 p.m. watch—dull!

Friday, April 10, 1942—Worked on pistol lists. 12-4 watch. Loading drill and instruction. Cooler. Must be easing north. Planes on scouting hop. Sea almost too rough. Took an hour to recover 4 planes. Lon came in fine, the rest had trouble. Got the

“mid” coming up, so will hit the hay.

Saturday, April 11, 1942—4-6 watch, 4-8 in the morning. Right cold. Still going northwest! Spring must be well in in South Dakota. Mm!

Sunday, April 12, 1942—Our course still northwest. Looks like even colder weather ahead. Tomorrow we rendezvous with *Vincennes*, *Nashville*, *Cimarron*, and 4 destroyers. The coast of Japan—that's my dope. Carrier planes fly air patrol constantly. One cracked up landing! Allied air offensive in Southwest.

Monday, April 13, 1942—General Quarters 4:30. Like a winter morning in South Dakota. 8-12 a.m. watch. The other carrier group joined us at 0630. What a surprise—she is loaded down with [scribbled out]. Captain spoke to the ship, said we were attacking “Japanese territories.” Everyone has a smile a mile long. Maybe [scribbled out] will join us. My theory is [scribbled out] will attack without declaring war, simultaneously with our push.

Wednesday, April 15, 1942—Still going west, heading for Tokyo. General Quarters 0500. Wet cold and against the wind. Visibility bad, sea rougher than ever. Rained and sleeted. Everyone is bundled up. It's luxury to get inside. With two carriers, we have something to work with. It is spring back home. Trees leafing and birds. S'funny how one never notices those things when you have them. Winter in April! Dad's birthday!

April 16, 1942—General Quarters 4:30. About froze. Shifted to the 4th Section so it means a 2000–2400 watch instead of all night in. Aren't I the lucky one. Read a book... *And Now Goodbye*, by James Hilton, very good. American bombers attacked the Philippines. Night watch wasn't bad. Clear, cold. Felt like there should be crisp snow underfoot. I wonder if

Those in Peril

The sobering ritual of a wartime burial at sea was a common experience for crews of vessels like Salt Lake City.



Funeral at Sea

Near Pago Pago.

God be with you sailor boys.



Semper Fidelis

Taplett, left, 1947-48, and in 1950 second from left during a planning session for the assault on Inchon, Korea, at which he led the amphibious landing.

trees are leafing in South Dakota. Getting by on very little sleep. Before this journey is over we'll be getting less.

Thursday, April 17, 1942—So women will now be commissioned in the Navy! Some stuff! General Quarters 0450. Still winterish.

Just so it doesn't freeze! We are fueling from *Cimarron*. Late this afternoon or tomorrow we'll head in at good speed and pray we aren't discovered! Those ["B-25s" scribbled out] better do their stuff. To lunch. Fueled. Weather is lousy but just the kind we need: rainy, foggy, etc.

April 18, 1942—What a day! I'll bet ["Tokyo" discernible in scribbles] is wondering what in the hell. General Quarters 0420. Condition 1 0730. Launched ["bombers" discernible in scribbles] 0820. The last one was off at 0920. Weather bad and sea worse than rough. A beautiful job of flying. Hardly possible to think those [scribbled out] would make it. At 0830 sank patrol vessel. 2 more patrol vessels went down about 3:30 p.m. *Nashville* picked up survivors. [scribbled out] had bad day. One plane crashed into the sea—all rescued. 3 damaged on landing. Secured from Condition I 6:30 p.m., into Condition II. ["Tokyo" discernible in scribbles] admitted bombing. No report from our side, but I know it was successful. This is history. To Bed.

April 19, 1942—Joined destroyers. ["Tokyo" discernible in scribbles] denies everything. Funny, we haven't even announced we bombed.

Monday, April 20, 1942—General Quarters 0500. 2400-0400 watch. Gun drills. Quarters and & abandon ship drill. 1600-1800 watch. Jap battlewagon rumored at Wake. Take a sock at them, maybe. Course looks home-ward bound.

Tuesday, April 21, 1942—Weather still cold & wet.

Thursday, April 23, 1942—Warmed up, but still need the sheepskin.

Friday, April 24, 1942—A very commonplace journey home. Torpedo planes from our carriers staged an attack on us. Hope we never really run into such an attack. They are certain disaster! Our float planes flew as the ocean is fairly smooth. After 3 weeks of rough sea, a pleasant change. Wrote letters.

On April 27, 1942, Captain Ellis Zacharias of USS *Salt Lake City* swore in Robert D. Taplett, USMC, as a 1st lieutenant.

April 30, 1942—Under way again. Left laundry ashore.

Thursday, May 7, 1942—Mark up another trip across the equator—my third. Hot as blazes. Sub alerts. Destroyer dropped one charge. Big battle in Solomons. Heading for no one knows. Probably the Solomons. Sleeping is terrible. Getting closer to trouble.

Saturday, May 9, 1942—Carrier planes doing lots of dive-bombing and strafing practice & high-altitude. What a change from 20 days ago, when we were off Tokyo, practically freezing.

Sunday, May 10, 1942—Mother's Day, near Fiji. Warm and bright. Things look better in the Southwest Pacific, right where we are headed! Alert: an unidentified plane, proved to be a R.A.A.F. B-24. *Chicago Times* correspondent, [Keith] Wheeler, is from Huron. Knows George DeKlotz.

Monday, May 11, 1942—Still in the same area, N 7 E of New Caledonia. Fueled.

Salt Lake City fought in March 1943 in a decisive action near the Aleutians chain. Naval historian Samuel Eliot Morison called the Battle of the Komandorski Islands "the last heavy gunfire daylight action, with no interference by air power, submarines or torpedoes." Afterwards, Taplett was transferred to the Command & General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, where he served from January to March 1944. He fought at Guam, where John Ptak, his best friend, was killed. In 1946, Robert Taplett married Patricia Kingston in Woodside, California. His assignments 1946-50 included commanding navy supply barracks at Clearview, Utah, at Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay, and at Alameda Naval Air Station in Alameda, California, as well



as service with the 1st Marine Division headquarters battalion at Camp Pendleton, California. He mobilized with the First Provisional Marine Division in 1950 as part of the “Fire Brigade” that blunted the North Korean attack on the Pusan perimeter. He led the amphibious landing at Inchon and participated in the capture of Seoul, securing the Government Building for the retransfer of power to President Syngman Rhee. After the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir, he received, besides the Navy Cross, two Silver Stars, the Legion of Merit, and a Bronze Star. In the 1950s, Colonel Taplett lectured on close air support, was academic director of the Basic School at Quantico, Virginia, and served at Marine Corps headquarters in Washington, DC, and in Hawaii. Upon retiring from the Marine Corps in 1960, he worked for professional associations and the U.S. Postal Service. He and his wife, wed 58 years, had six children and nine grandchildren. In 2003 he recounted his experiences at Chosin in a memoir, *Dark Horse Six*, a title derived from his battalion’s radio call, “Dark Horse.” Later that year, Robert D. Taplett died. He was 86. With Patricia, who died in 2007, he lies at Arlington National Cemetery. ★

Go Tell the Spartans

Above, Taplett, right, receives a Silver Star for valor at Inchon; below, Marines face entrenched Chinese forces at Chosin Reservoir on December 7, 1950.



Sanitation Innovation

How New York climbed out of waist-deep waste
By Rachel Serkin

Keeping It Clean
The 1890s Progressive Movement brought a new mode of sanitation to the city that never sleeps.

In 1841 English author Charles Dickens, at work on a book about the United States of America, came for a research tour. He spent a month in New York City acquainting himself with theaters, restaurants, prisons, asylums, neighborhoods, and streets. Having documented London's Augean slums, Dickens nonetheless goggled at the sight of lower Manhattan's Five Points. Originally the Collect, a deep freshwater pond that was fouled by chemicals and offal from abattoirs and tanneries, then inexpertly reclaimed with landfill, the Five Points existed in a fog of stench. Named for the five-way intersection at its miasmic heart, the neighborhood barely was keeping itself atop its swampy setting, its ramshackle housing literally sinking below ground. In *American Notes* Dickens describes a place "reeking, everywhere with dirt and filth... all that that is loathsome, drooping and decayed is here." The Five Points personified a city so neglected by its government that garbage blanketed its streets. In the decades following Dickens's visit, New York grew in a



Herd Mentality

In 1869 New York decided pigs no longer could roam at large, living off the garbage they ate. The result was a slapstick roundup.



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CARCASSES.**

swirl of trash and worse, until citizen-reformers, a mustachioed engineer, and a very special uniform intervened with solutions that eventually reverberated worldwide.

Long before its funk repelled Dickens, the city was struggling with trash. When the Dutch West India Company established a trading post on Manhattan's southern tip in 1624, New Amsterdam counted 270 residents. Forty years later a city of over 9,000, rough and lawless, perched on the edge of the known world. Early records portray a burg beslimed. House fronts featured privies. Horse manure, garbage, animal carcasses, and rubbish clogged the streets. In 1657, iron-fisted Governor Peter Stuyvesant imposed trash removal ordinances: "[H]enceforth no one shall be allowed to throw into the streets or into the graft [canal, running in the middle of the present Broad Street] any rubbish, filth, ashes, oyster-shells, dead animal or anything like it...Furthermore everybody is ordered, to keep the streets clean before his house or lot..." In 1664

England seized New Amsterdam, renaming the former Dutch holding for a venerable city at home. New York in the 18th century endured epidemics and high mortality. In the 1740s city government passed laws banning certain industries from locating near public water sources and more sharply regulating waste disposal. However, before administrators could implement many of these strictures, the city was swept up in the American Revolution, the arrival of national independence, and the rise of industry.

In the early 1800s, New York City ballooned. Hundreds of tanneries, slaughterhouses, and factories rose, employing thousands of immigrants. There was no municipal garbage collection; dwellers hauled their own waste, which like the population doubled by the decade. Wealthy residents of Washington Square, Gramercy Park, and similarly tony districts paid to have their trash hauled. Recycling consisted of impoverished men, women, and children sifting garbage for reusable rags, glass, and metal to sell. Most trash landed in the streets and eventually the rivers. To

On the Killing Floor
 Abattoirs dotted 19th-century American downtowns, and New York's was no exception. Below, scavengers pick at garbage before a scow's crew casts off to dump its contents in the ocean.



clear the streets city officials encouraged letting swine loose to roam Manhattan consuming garbage—and adding their excreta to the mess.

By 1860 the population exceeded 800,000, mostly living cheek by jowl along lower Manhattan's 300-some miles of streets. Street sanitation was assigned to the Police Department, which was so inefficient at the job that builders of elegant brownstones installed stoops leading to second-floor entries to hoist occupants and visitors above the creeping decay. New Yorkers wore top hats and toted parasols less as fashion statements than as shields against whatever was being flung onto them from overhead. Street gutters carried offal into the rivers; wooden garbage boxes teemed. In a city dependent on the labor of horses, no rules applied to equine care. Riddled with disease, starved, and abused, animals that could weigh more than half a ton collapsed and died, often amid traffic, and were left to rot.

Alarmed by disease outbreaks and government ineffectiveness, wealthy reform-minded residents formed an independent civic action group. Working with local physicians, the Citizens Association established the Metropolitan Board of Health, in 1866 declaring war on garbage. Dividing neighborhoods into districts, the board appointed physician-investigators to monitor and field thousands of sanitation complaints. Within four years groundbreaking sanitation laws were in place. The city banned the throwing of garbage and excrement into the streets. Ordinances stipulated that residents, landlords, and business owners had the responsibility to remove manure and refuse from streets and privy yards in front of their buildings. Building owners were to provide “suitable and sufficient” boxes, barrels, and tubs for garbage and metal receptacles for ashes. Butchers and tanneries no longer could use the streets as disposal sluices. In 1869 New York banned livestock from roaming loose inside the city limits.

In 1871, the sachems of the Democratic Tammany Hall machine, led by soon-to-be-jailed William M. “Boss” Tweed, outflanked the Citizens Association by

redrafting the city's charter, returning jurisdiction over health and sanitation to the Police Department. Service stayed slack through the decade. No new street cleaning inspectors were hired; the bureau's clerical staff withered. Sanitation managers appointed by Tammany under the spoils system ignored their jobs. To keep their positions, department workers had to kick back a portion of their salaries to those no-show bosses. The city budget shortchanged street cleaning. Irate at Tammany, residents blamed sanitation workers, often heckling, throwing garbage, and even attacking them.

The 1894 mayoral election occurred amid popular ire fired by Tammany corruption and the previous year's nationwide recession. Republicans and independent Democrats allied with reformers, women's organizations, and the Citizens





In Tammany Times
When the Democratic Party machine was in power, New York was a gigantic compost heap of garbage.

WARING MADE HIS MARK AS A CIVIL ENGINEER IN 1878, WHEN HE TAMED A YELLOW FEVER EPIDEMIC IN MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE, BY INSTALLING AN INNOVATIVE WASTEWATER REMOVAL SYSTEM.

Association to run Ohio-born banker William Lafayette Strong. A novice chosen for his business acumen and spotless record, Strong embodied anti-Tammany fervor. The machine backed Macy's owner Nathan Straus, who within weeks quit the race, hurriedly replaced by former mayor Hugh Grant, a pillar of scandal who lost to Strong by more than 40,000 votes. Once in office Strong moved to name as street cleaning commissioner prominent up-and-comer Theodore Roosevelt. When Roosevelt held out for the police commissionership, Strong recruited army veteran George E. Waring—a sanitation engineer who insisted on being addressed as "Colonel."

Born in Pound Ridge, New York, in 1833, Waring came from a family that had made its fortune making stoves and farm tools; George grew up steeped in agricultural science. By age 20 he had written a manual aimed at young farmers and was working the lecture circuit, speaking at Grange halls across New England. In 1853 *New York Tribune* Editor-in-Chief Horace Greeley hired Waring to manage his farm at Chappaqua,

New York. Greeley encouraged his new man to experiment with the latest drainage methods. Waring's work soon caught the attention of civil engineer Egbert L. Viele, chief engineer on the construction of a huge new park at the heart of New York. Viele hired Waring to supervise drainage on the undertaking; he held that position until Central Park was finished. Park Superintendent Frederick Law Olmsted praised Waring's hand in helping to create a sanitary urban park.

Waring enlisted in the Union Army in 1861. Under Maj. Gen. John C. Frémont, he rode as a major with the Frémont Hussars, assigned to contain Confederate guerrillas in Missouri, Tennessee, and Arkansas. The army promoted him to colonel. After Appomattox he returned to agriculture, in 1867 hiring on as a manager at the experimental Ogden Farm near Newport, Rhode Island. At Ogden Farm Waring continued his studies of agriculture, animal husbandry, and sewage engineering. He wrote treatises on waste and water management and public health, including the critically acclaimed *Draining for Profit, Draining for Health*.

His reputation in managing waste brought Waring opportunity in the form of disaster—a yellow fever epidemic ravaging Memphis, Tennessee. In 1878, fever was afloat on the Mississippi. An infected boatman evaded quarantine and entered the city, resulting in over 5,000 deaths and devastating the local economy. Declaring a national emergency, President Rutherford B. Hayes enlisted Waring. Applying his familiarity with the city from his wartime tenure, Waring persuaded city leaders to let him build an innovative wastewater removal system that separated tainted water from ordinary runoff. By October mortality among Memphians was down, public well-being had improved, and other towns were interested in Waring's approach to sewerage. His Memphis achievements made him a leading expert in drainage and sanitation and launched him into a career as an international wastewater consultant. He had clients in London, Santiago, Cuba, and cities across the United States.

Importuned by Mayor Strong to apply his skills to New York City's public health morass, Waring accepted an appointment as commissioner of street cleaning on the condition that the city government leave him be. Wielding his military skills, Waring reshaped his new domain with an eye to giving workers purpose and dignity. He wanted street cleaners to see themselves as "well trained and disciplined men, the representative soldiers of cleanliness and health, soldiers of the public, self-respecting, and life-saving," he said. He grouped cleaners into regiment-style sections assigned to given areas. He routed Tammany hacks, replacing dead wood with ambitious young men holding college and technical degrees. To boost accountability and morale, Waring assured his men that Tammany's grip on sanitation was history, and that the department now ran on merit and performance.

Colonel and Company

Waring, left, always cut a dapper figure, serving as a role model to the sanitation crews he hired, trained, and managed.

Provided a street cleaner punched in at the daily roll call and performed faithfully and respectfully, his job was secure. Waring increased pay to \$60 a month, empowering workers to elect representatives from their ranks to hear grievances and field suggestions.



Strong Leadership

Elected as a reformer, NYC Mayor William Strong came into office aiming to make the city cleaner and more honest.

Each man got a small two-wheeled truck designed to support an open-necked bag for street sweepings, a broom with a scraper, a long- and a short-handled shovel, and a watering can. On patrol, crews collected bags of garbage left at curbside onto carts and bagged sweepings. Waring regularly traveled the streets to check on the quality of work. A horse lover, he had new stables built to shelter the departments' animals, ordering that they be properly fed and groomed.

In a further gesture to morale, he outfitted the department's rank-and-file in white trousers, jackets, and occasionally pith helmets, conveying an air of hygiene and authority but also approachability and accountability. The moniker "White Wings," initially a catcall, quickly became a term of endearment. Under Waring the sanitation department rose to a standard unmatched by any government department in the nation.

Waring's first test as sanitation commissioner came on the heels of his hiring. Within weeks of his starting work snowstorms pelted New York City. In the first five weeks of 1895 Waring's street cleaners removed more snow, and at less cost, than the total of the previous five years. In March, Waring went after the Five Points. More than 50 years after Charles Dickens characterized the slum, it remained "as filthy a district as there was in the city." The challenge of cleaning the grim neighborhood, whose inhabitants had





manhandled street cleaners, went beyond garbage and refuse removal to scrap for the soul of New York. Waring strategized carefully, appointing as foremen for the task graduates of MIT and Harvard and requesting police escorts. Accompanied by two officers, Waring's men descended into the Five Points and went to work. Within days the police were no longer needed and for the first time in Five Points history street surfaces there were visible.

The public and the press marveled at the changes Waring was wreaking. "Before" and "after" photos showed filthy thoroughfares and lanes made fresh. The commissioner made good copy, and reporters tagged along as he made his rounds, checking on

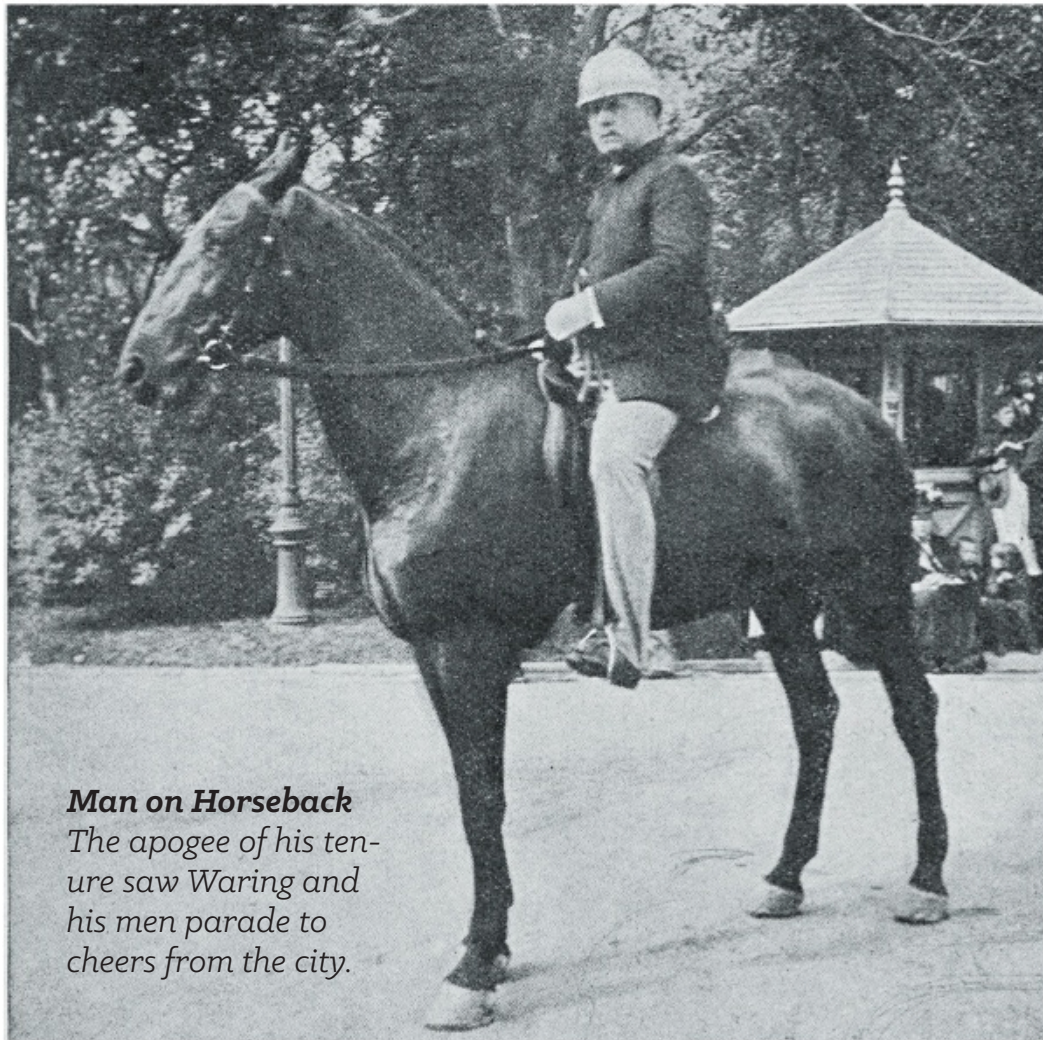
everyday matters and inquiring about special projects. He used the press as a pulpit to preach the Progressive theory that residents had a duty to keep their city clean. Realizing that cleanliness began in the home, the department circulated guidance on sorting waste into four main categories: ashes, rubbish (dry waste), garbage, and street sweepings. City workers sorted these materials for conversion into grease, fertilizer, compost, and landfill. Unsavable waste was incinerated. To educate immigrants, the commission enlisted schools, settlement houses, and sanitation workers and with funding by philanthropists formed juvenile street-cleaning leagues whose motto was "Cleanliness is Catching." The leagues encouraged thousands of children to adopt and circulate the slogan. League members participated in street cleaning competitions and enjoyed earning merit badges and participating in award assemblies and parades. Taking home what the program taught, children showed parents how to sort and dispose of waste.

In May 1896, Waring organized a showcase. Stretching from 59th Street to Madison Square, the parade down Fifth Avenue drew thousands for an afternoon of marching bands and 1,400 crisply uniformed White Wings moving in step with brooms behind Waring, in military uniform and white helmet, astride a fine brown horse. The following year a similar spectacle down Eighth Avenue to Madison Square drew more than 100,000 onlookers and rhapsodic coverage. The *Daily News* noted that Waring's "mustache was more carefully waxed than ever...." And in a column of verse dedicated to the street cleaners, the *New York Press* published "The March of the



Up from the Depths

From bottom: a Tammany-era street cleaning crew; Waring's "White Wings" muster for action; to the tune of a band's blare, street cleaners parade with their gear in the late 1890s.



Man on Horseback
The apogee of his tenure saw Waring and his men parade to cheers from the city.

TAMMANY'S SACHEMS FOUGHT HIM AT EVERY TURN, ACCUSING THE COMMISSIONER OF SPENDING TOO HEAVILY AND MOCKING HIS IDEALS AND HIS WORK WITH YOUTHS.

and civic morale, he said.

Cleaner streets and luminous press coverage could not keep Tammany from elbowing its way back into power. The sachems had fought Waring at every turn, accusing him of overspending and mocking his ideals, which the bosses said amounted to having schoolchildren give horses fruit skins rather than toss them onto the sidewalk. Tammany criticized Waring for overreach, citing examples of juvenile street-cleaning leaguers issuing citations and tenants threatening to report their landlords for not cleaning buildings. In November 1897, Tammany candidate Robert van Wyck was elected mayor, ousting Strong and his reformist platform. The Tammany bosses understood that to hold onto power they had to change the way they did business. Within months, Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the

White Brigade," the last stanza proclaiming "Because you made the first crusade, for cleanliness and beauty,/Which are the next, says holy text,/To godliness and duty."

In 1897, Waring told *McClure's Magazine* his teams were sweeping 924 miles of street a day. Prior to his arrival as sanitation chief "the streets were almost universally in a filthy state," he said. "Rubbish of all kinds, garbage, and ashes lay neglected in the streets and in the hot weather the city stank with the emanations of putrefying organic matter."

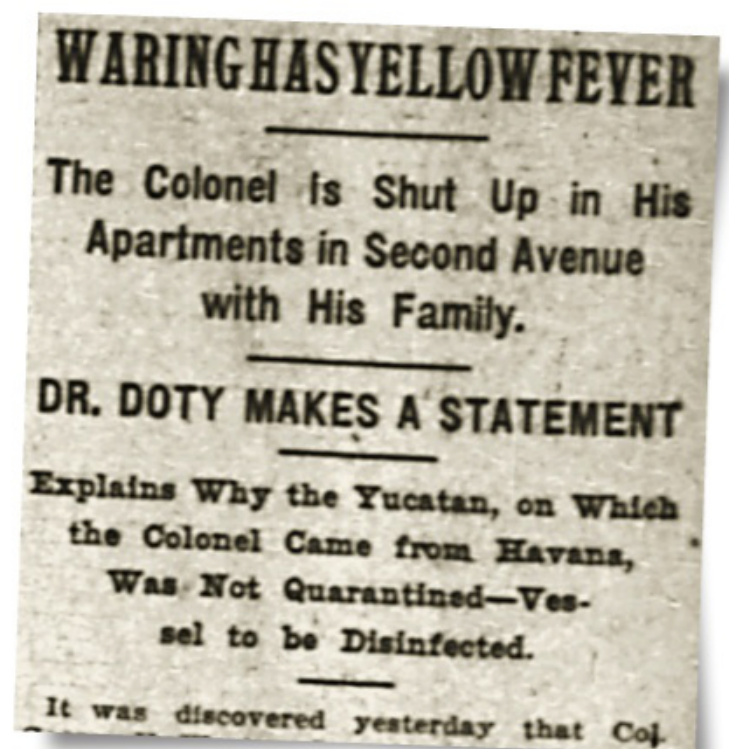
The department was spending 17 percent more under his leadership, but that rise was less than increases in years past, he maintained. And his budget was not lining city officials' pockets but underwriting the department's work, which improved public health

Bronx, and Staten Island consolidated into the modern municipality of New York City. This new New York needed more infrastructure and services than ever before and if Tammany could not deliver, voters would boot the sachems in favor of reform candidates.

Waring was out of work, but civil service still called. In spring 1898 the United States and Spain went to war. By summer's end thousands of American troops were in Cuba. Tropical diseases, including yellow fever, whose mode of transmission—mosquito bites—was unknown at the time, were striking down more American soldiers than the Spanish ("Rough Ride," February 2018).

Alerted to Waring's work in Cuba, President William McKinley named him to chair a commission assigned to study public health on the island. In October Waring spent two weeks touring Cuba's capital, Havana, and outlying army camps, drafting recommendations for a program of sewage and street cleaning. He returned to New York on Tuesday, October 18. The next day he began feeling yellow fever symptoms.

On Saturday, October 29, Waring died—"an irony of fate," *The New York Times* said. He was 68. In New York, thousands paid tribute to the man who had made their city a better place to live. Although the White Wings eventually passed into history and Waring did not solve New York City's trash problems, the colonel's systems and structures helped drive municipal reforms worldwide, eventually leading to the construction of countless miles of sewers. Praising "Colonel Waring's broom that first let light into the slum," muckraking photographer Jacob Riis said, "His broom saved more lives in the crowded tenements than a squad of doctors." ★



Lavender Legend

Oscar Wilde came to conquer America with an arched eyebrow and a saucy demeanor
By Peter Carlson

Oscar Wilde arrived in the United States on January 3, 1882, wearing the extravagantly flamboyant clothing that would soon make him famous—lavender trousers, frilly white shirt, blue scarf, green coat trimmed with seal fur, and a turban-like hat that perched atop his shoulder-length brown hair.

Newspaper reporters covering the Irish writer's arrival thought he dressed funny and took careful notes on his attire. They also thought he talked funny. "His manner of talking is somewhat affected," a reporter noted, "his great peculiarity being a rhythmic chant in which every fourth syllable is accentuated." *The New York Times* reported that Wilde laughed funny, too: "His laugh was a succession of broad 'haw, haw, haws.'"

Wilde was surprised by American newspaper writers' descriptions of him but delighted to be the subject of their attention. He was a man who believed all publicity to be good publicity—or, as he famously put it later, "There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about."

In the next 51 weeks, Wilde became the subject of countless American conversations—never mind hundreds of articles, editorials, cartoons, and songs—as he zigzagged the country, traveling 15,000 miles, delivering nearly 150 lectures, and conducting more than 100 interviews with reporters, some of whom mocked him as a "sissy," "an ass-thete," and a "long-haired what's it." On his wild, zany circuit, Wilde ate gargantuan meals, drank copious quantities of whiskey and wine, visited a silver mine and an opium den, got fleeced, and hobnobbed with Walt Whitman and Jefferson Davis.

"How do you like our country?" a reporter asked the traveler two months into his journey.

"I am lost in wonder and amazement," Wilde replied. "It's not a country but a world."

More than a century after his death, Oscar Wilde is famous for his bon mots, his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and his play *The Importance of Being Earnest*. He's also a legendary gay martyr, imprisoned in England for two years at hard labor for the crime of "gross indecency." But in 1882, that was all in the future. Wilde was 27, a



Ahead of His Time
Wilde's unabashedly
gay mien brought him
much grief but also
made him an icon.

Dublin-born Londoner who had written only an unproduced play and a self-published book of poems. Even so, 6'3" and broad-shouldered, he cut quite a figure in the British capital's artsy salons with his dress and his deportment, sometimes carrying a lily or a sunflower and once appearing at an art exhibit wearing a live snake as a scarf. He proclaimed himself an aesthete who lived for beauty and he dazzled dinner party companions with observations like "I can resist everything except temptation" and "Don't be led astray down the path of virtue."

Wilde craved attention—and got it aplenty. British humor magazine *Punch* caricatured him. In 1881, W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, composer and writer of the hit comic operettas *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *The Pirates of Penzance*, created a kindred satirical vehicle, *Patience*, or *Bunthorne's Bride*, which satirized aestheticism, a social movement of which Wilde was a pillar. The cast of characters included the eponymous protagonist, a flower-toting Wildean fop of a fellow who sings, "I'm an aesthetic sham."

When the operetta proved a smash hit in London, producer Richard D'Oyly Carte booked *Patience* into New York City's Standard Theater. D'Oyly Carte proposed to send Wilde himself to America to deliver lectures, dazzle the Yanks—and promote *Patience*.

Wilde eagerly agreed, but he had no intention of promoting a production that mocked him. What he was planning to promote was himself.

"Somehow or other, I'll be famous," he said, "And if not famous, I'll be notorious."

While Wilde was sailing the Atlantic, swigging Champagne and amusing fellow passengers in the SS *Arizona's* saloon, Colonel W.F. Morse, a New York promo man, was booking lectures for him and filling reporters' ears with tales of Wilde's eccentricities.

He was the dandy *Patience* satirized, Morse promised, a flower-sniffing freak given to preaching England's "latest form of fashionable madness"—aestheticism, in Morse's words the "gospel of morbid languor and sickly sensuousness."

Always eager to mock pretentious Brits, American newsmen flocked to meet *Arizona* at the dock, mobbing Wilde as he watched a porter toss his suitcases into a coach. A scribe asked the writer why he'd come to America.

"I am here to diffuse beauty, and I have no objection to saying that," Wilde answered. "I say, porter, handle that box more carefully, will you?"

"What is your definition of aestheticism?" the

Showing the Way

Puck and other British magazines set the tone for derisory American coverage of Wilde.

journalist asked.

"Aestheticism is a search after the signs of the beautiful."

A reporter inquired about *Patience*.

"I fail to see its point, sir, but think it a very pretty opera with some charming music," Wilde said. "As a satire on the philosophy of the beautiful, sir, I think it is the veriest twaddle."

Obviously, Oscar Wilde wasn't cut out for promoting the play, but for promoting himself.

Morse rescued Wilde from the press, hustling him to Delmonico's, the fanciest restaurant in Manhattan. Two days later, the advance man escorted his client, clad in fey aesthetic garb, to a reception. At the event



"O. W."

"O, I feel just as happy as a bright Sunflower!"

Lays of Christy Minstrelsy.

Æsthete of Æsthetes!

What's in a name?

The poet is WILDE,

But his poetry's tame.



Wilde was feted by New York's mayor, two prominent ministers, and many rich women eager to discuss art with an authentic aesthete. One sought advice on arranging decorative screens in her home.

"Why arrange them at all?" Wilde asked her. "Why not just let them occur?"

After the party, Wilde, accompanied by several matrons and a *New York Tribune* reporter, traveled to Broadway to take in *Patience*. Audience members turned to gawk as he arrived.

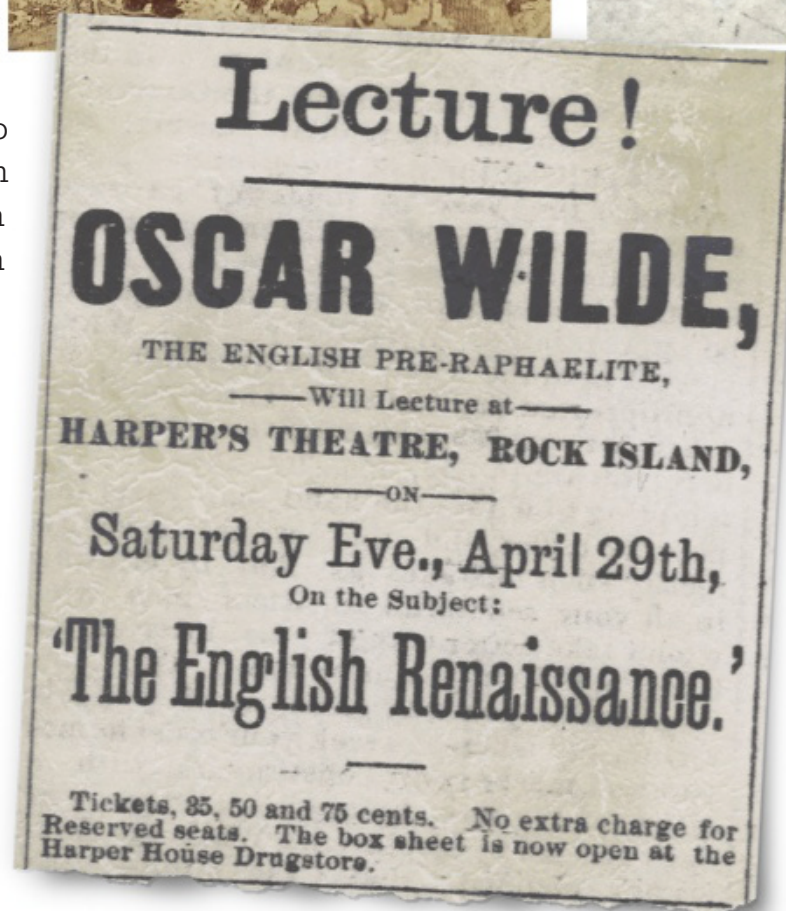
He'd seen the operetta twice in London and knew exactly how he'd take revenge. After the actor playing Bunthorne finished the song featuring the lyric "I am an aesthetic sham," Wilde struck.

"As the whole audience turned and looked at Mr. Wilde," the *Tribune* reported, "he leaned toward one of the ladies and said with a smile while looking at Bunthorne, 'This is the compliment that mediocrity pays to those who are not mediocre.'"

Touché! Take that, Gilbert and Sullivan!

Oscar Wilde had arrived. Utterly unknown a few days earlier, he became a media sensation. The New York papers covered his every action. Those accounts were reprinted nationwide, making reporters across America eager to cover him on his swings through their towns. And Morse had booked Wilde to lecture in dozens of towns.

The man of the moment was to deliver his first discourse on January 9 at Manhattan's 1,250-seat Chickering Hall. Morse's hype had paid off: The auditorium was sold out and scalpers were hawking tickets for \$2, twice face value.



Wilde, who had never given a lecture in his life, hadn't bothered to write one, either. Between social engagements, he dashed off a soliloquy on "The English Renaissance."

On the appointed evening, the towering Wilde strolled onstage at Chickering Hall wearing black silk knee breeches, black stockings, a starched white shirt garnished with a diamond, a black velvet jacket with lavender satin piping, patent leather shoes, and white kid gloves. "Among the many debts we owe to the supreme aesthetic faculty of Goethe..." he began in a monotone. Droning on, he elucidated his aesthetic philosophy, invoking Plato, Homer, Chaucer, Michelangelo, Byron, and Baudelaire. When he finished his abstruse oration, the audience applauded, probably not having grasped much of what he'd said. "The craze over Oscar Wilde

Famous for His Fame
Artists had a field day with Wilde's dandified look as well as his arch personal style, which embodied camp long before anyone defined that elusive quality.

THE TOWERING WILDE STROLLED ONSTAGE WEARING BLACK KNEE BREECHES, BLACK STOCKINGS, WHITE SHIRT, AND BLACK VELVET JACKET WITH LAVENDER SATIN PIPING.

Commercial Potential

Wilde, far right at New York's Chickering Hall, also became a popular accompaniment for advertisements, as in the face cream being flogged in the pitch at near right.



received a fatal blow last night," the *New York Evening Graphic* reported, because his audience realized that "they had been duped into aiding a young Irishman to make a pot of money."

Actually, Wilde's popularity soared, especially among the wives of Manhattan's Gilded Age tycoons, a demographic craving the European culture Wilde embodied. Soon, invitations to soirées at fashionable mansions were swamping him. "I am torn to bits by Society," Wilde wrote to a friend. "Immense receptions, wonderful dinners, crowds wait for my carriage. I wave a gloved hand and an ivory cane and they cheer."

After two weeks of adulation in Manhattan, Wilde crossed the Hudson and set out to conquer the rest of America, which proved tougher than he expected.

In Philadelphia, he reprised his "English Renaissance" lecture, this time before an audience "so cold," he lamented, that he considered "stopping and saying, 'You

"Utterly Utter"

Cynics predicted his presence in Gotham would exert an effete effect on everybody.

don't like this and there is no use of my going on." A reviewer described Wilde as "a weak, vain, pretentious crank."

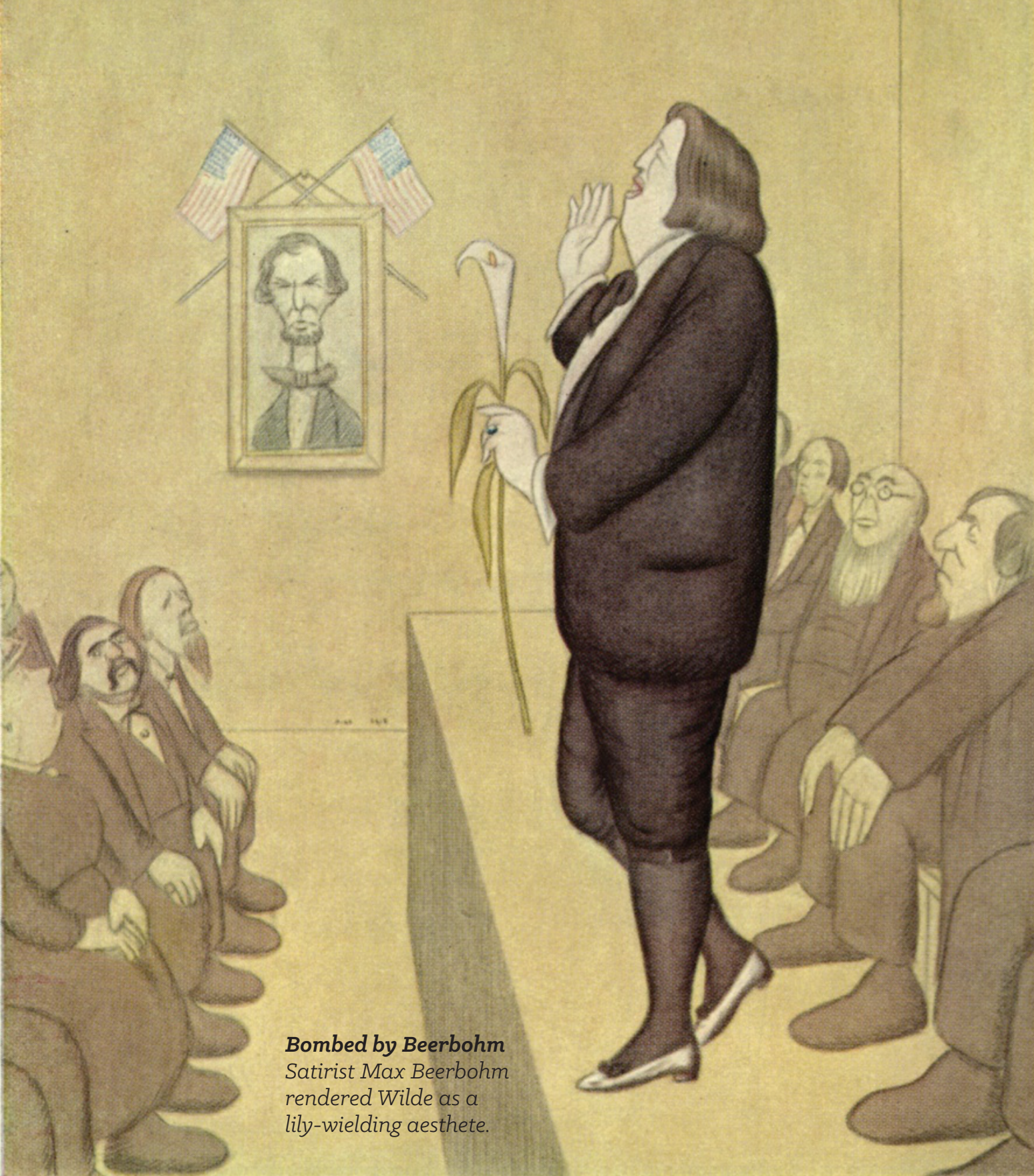
Further south, a front-page cartoon in *The Washington Post* depicted Wilde sniffing a sunflower beside an ape-like beast. "We present in close juxtaposition the pictures of Mr. Wilde of England and Mr. Wild of Borneo, who, judging from the resemblance, is undoubtedly kin," the image's caption read.

At Boston's Music Hall, Wilde watched from the stage as Harvard students wearing long wigs, knee breeches, and colorful ties paraded down the venue's center aisle, sniffing sunflowers. "I am impelled for the first time in my life," Wilde told the capacity crowd, "to breathe a fervent prayer: 'Save me from my disciples.'"

In New Haven, Connecticut, the next night, Yale students replayed the Harvard boys' stunt. At the University of Rochester, students convinced a janitor to march into the hall in blackface, wearing a swallowtail coat with a sunflower pinned to the lapel and waving a white-gloved hand. The prank caused such commotion that cops were summoned.

If Wilde's lectures weren't universally beloved, at least the wealthy and the arty seemed eager for his company. In Washington, DC, a judge





Bombed by Beerbohm
Satirist Max Beerbohm
rendered Wilde as a
lily-wielding aesthete.

**REPORTERS
KNOCKED ON
HIS HOTEL
ROOM DOOR,
ASKING SUCH
QUESTIONS
AS “WHAT IS
ART?” AND
“HOW MUCH
DO YOU MAKE
A NIGHT?”**



American Friends
American writers Julia
Ward Howe and Walt
Whitman welcomed
their brother in arms
when he came calling
upon them.

invited him to a reception at which he was introduced to several senators and the novelist Henry James, who later described Wilde as a “fatuous fool.” In Boston, Julia Ward Howe, author of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” invited her fellow celebrity writer to a fête where he met art collector Isabella Stewart Gardner and poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

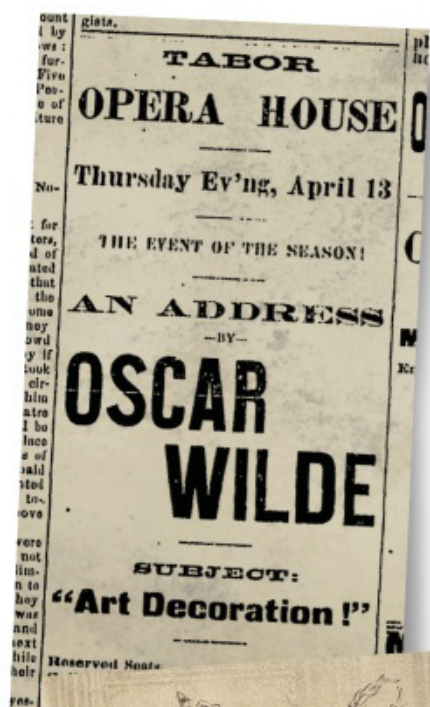
Wilde’s most moving encounter was in Camden, New Jersey, on a visit to his literary hero, Walt Whitman. “I come as a poet to call upon a poet,” he said when Whitman answered his door.

The two spent hours talking and drinking Whitman’s elderberry wine. To Wilde’s rarefied palate, the homemade beverage was dreadful, but he didn’t mind. “If it had been vinegar, I should have drunk it all the same,” he told a friend, “for I have an admiration for that man

which I can hardly express.”

Cleveland, Chicago, Salt Lake City—as Wilde roamed west, he switched lecture topics, replacing “The English Renaissance” with “The House Beautiful,” an audience-friendly discourse on interior decorating. Like a 19th-century Martha Stewart, he dispensed domestic wisdom. Candlelight is more beautiful than gaslight, he proclaimed, and tile floors more charming than carpets. But hat racks are “hideous,” wallpaper “gives one the impression of living in a paper box,” and mass-produced furniture is “bloodcurdling evidence of barbarism.”

In city upon city, reporters knocked on his hotel room door, requesting interviews and asking questions ranging from “What is art?” to “How much do you make a night?” At first the



Target of Opportunity

Wilde's appearance schedule encouraged the American press to embrace and expand on the caricaturish treatment British publications had accorded the writer.

phenomenon baffled him—"We have no interviewing in England," he said—but he warmed to the task of spewing opinions. On art: "We can live without art but we cannot live with bad art." Childrearing: "The child must be taught by constant association with beautiful things." Women's clothing: "Too somber. Many bright colors should be worn." Men's clothing: "Velvet should be chosen," not broadcloth, which is "devoid of beauty." Bad manners: "The most painful defect in American civilization." And American women: "I see a quantity of beautiful young girls...but there are few handsome matrons."

Wilde took mischievous joy in insulting American landmarks. He described Niagara Falls as "a vast unnecessary amount of water going the wrong way" and proclaimed that Salt Lake City's Mormon Tabernacle reminded him of "a soup kettle." He found Cincinnati hideous: "I wonder why no criminal has ever pleaded the ugliness of your city as an excuse for his crimes."

To several interviewers, he grumbled about a small Illinois town's name. The very sound of "Griggsville" offended his refined sensibilities. "Griggstown" and "Griggs" were acceptable, he told a reporter, but not "Griggsville."

"Is that not the ultimate in vulgarity?" he asked. The reporter mentioned Western towns with names like Murderer's Gulch and Hangtown. "They at least convey something of interest," Wilde replied. "But in such a name as Griggsville, there is nothing but utterly unmitigated and offensive vulgarity. Ugh." With that, the reporter noted, "the aesthete's velvet coat shook with the violence of his emotions."

Wilde's mood brightened when he reached San Francisco. It was late March and his beloved flowers were blooming. He checked into the luxurious Palace Hotel and attended an opera. At the curtain call, he tossed the prima donna a bouquet. One night, after he had lectured, two police officers and a reporter escorted him around Chinatown, visiting flophouses, gam-

WILDE HAD IT IN FOR A TOWN IN ILLINOIS WHOSE NAME IRKED HIM: "IN SUCH A NAME AS GRIGGSVILLE THERE IS NOTHING BUT UTTERLY UNMITIGATED VULGARITY."

bling joints, and opium dens.

"This," he said, "is just like a chapter from *The Arabian Nights*!"

On April Fool's Day, members of the Bohemian Club, curious to see if the dandy could hold his hooch, invited him for a night of serious drinking. Wilde could, and he did, and by the time he sauntered jauntily into the dawn, many a Bohemian had passed out drunk. Impressed, the club commissioned an oil portrait of the visiting "three bottle man."

"California is an Italy without its art," Wilde intoned as he made his way east. In Denver, he spoke in the Grand Opera House while a group of prostitutes gathered nearby, wearing knee breeches

and flowered hats in his honor. "We know what makes a cat wild," a hooker told a newsman. "But what makes Oscar Wilde?"

From Denver he traveled to Leadville, Colorado, a mining town famous for vice and violence. After discoursing on "The Decorative Arts," Wilde accepted an invitation to tour a silver mine and rode hundreds of feet into the earth in a metal ore bucket. When he arrived at the bottom, visibly spooked, miners soothed him with whiskey, then handed him a jackhammer so he could drill into an ore vein. He stayed until dawn, drinking and chatting with the miners. "They are cordial and generous and not at all rough," he reported. "It was one of my most delightful experiences."

Kansas, Missouri, Ohio—Wilde lectured all spring, returning to New York, then orbiting through Canada before undertaking a long tour of the American South. He entertained romantic notions about the region, likening the secessionist cause to his native Ireland's independence movement. "It was a struggle for autonomy, self-government for a people," he said, apparently forgetting about slavery.

Wilde toured New Orleans with former Confederate general P.G.T. Beauregard. In Mississippi, he arranged to visit former Confederate president Jefferson Davis, which shocked some Davis admirers. Why, asked Alabama's *Selma Times*, would "the grand Southerner" deign to meet this "pseudo-fanatical, long-haired aesthetic humbug?"

Wilde and Davis did seem an odd match. They met at Davis's plantation and dined with



his wife and daughter. Whatever they discussed—The Battle of Vicksburg? The beauty of sunflowers?—is lost to history. “He impressed me very much as a man of the keenest intellect,” Wilde said later. Davis, 75 and frail, was less enthralled. He excused himself early and went to bed, claiming illness. “I did not like the man,” the old secessionist told his wife.

After a second round of appearances in New England, Wilde returned in mid-October to New York City, inspiring a *Tribune* headline: “Oscar Wilde Thoroughly Exhausted.” True, but he was also rich and even more famous. Lecturing had earned him more than \$10,000—today, \$250,000-plus—and made him a household name, inspiring popular songs about him and unauthorized use of his picture in advertisements for products ranging from cigars to stoves to “Mme. Fontaine’s Freckle Cure.”

Wilde hung around New York for two months, attending plays and partying with actresses and literary folk. On December 14, a confidence man lured him into a crooked dice game. Wilde started out winning but ended up skinned to the tune of \$1,160—which he paid by check, enabling him to stop payment. Walking to a nearby police station, he

Still Wildeing After All These Years

In 1990, Robert Williams, of Zap Comix fame, imagined Wilde thrilling Leadville.

Underground Sensation

Descending into a mine in Leadville, Colorado, Wilde, at first unnerved, so took to the experience that he pronounced it among his most delightful.

announced, “I’ve just made a damn fool of myself.” From a book of mug shots, he identified the bunco artist, one “Hungry Joe.” On December 27–51 weeks after arriving stateside—Wilde sailed to England, where he resumed lecturing.

He’d learned something on his American tour—forget big ideas, keep it amusing—and so his set piece “Impressions of America” skipped grandiose pronouncements in favor of amusing observations. “America is the noisiest country that ever existed,” Wilde said, a place where “everybody seems in a hurry to catch a train.” Americans have a “sound, practical sense” that is “not favorable to poetry or romance.”

He compared the prairie to “a piece of blotting paper” and pronounced himself “disappointed” in Niagara Falls: “Every American bride is taken there, and the sight of the stupendous waterfall must be one of the earliest, if not the keenest, disappointments in American married life.”

Through “Impressions” Wilde kept his patter light—“I know but little about the country,” he admitted—and made no mention of America’s grand experiment in democracy until his final sentence: “It is well worth one’s while to go to a country which can teach us the beauty of the word *Freedom* and the value of the thing *Liberty*.” ★



The Riddle of Sinatra

When Frank Sinatra needed a next level, arranger Nelson Riddle helped him find it
By Tom Huntington

Frank Sinatra had been headlining at New York's Copacabana since the end of March 1950 when he took to the nightclub's stage late on April 26 for that Wednesday evening's last set. Only about 70 customers, less than 10 percent of the Copa's capacity, were still in attendance. Around 2 a.m., Sinatra opened his mouth to sing—and nothing came out. “Just dust,” he said later. His audience stared. He stared back. Bandleader Skitch Henderson thought Sinatra was fooling around. “But then he caught my eye,” Henderson recalled. “I guess the color drained out of

my face as I saw the panic in his.” Finally, the singer whispered “Good night” and walked offstage, where he began coughing up blood. His vocal chords had hemorrhaged. Doctors told Sinatra not to talk for at least a week. He canceled a booking in Chicago.

Sinatra's career had already been in a nosedive. Now he entered a wilderness period that saw him forced to produce musical drivel, until Capitol Records took a chance on him. The label paired the singer with arranger Nelson Riddle, a collaboration that revitalized Sinatra's studio work. Embraced in Riddle's artful, sophisticated orchestrations, Sinatra reinvented himself for adults—as an exuberant swinger on upbeat



Partners in Rhythm

Riddle's arrangements gave Sinatra a muscular, vibrant context for his mature voice.

albums or a broken-hearted brooder on introspective outings. His collaborations with Nelson Riddle were the mold that reshaped Frank Sinatra into the cultural icon familiar today.

Sinatra had been on top of the world. The Hoboken, New Jersey, native knew from boyhood that he wanted to be a singer. He was working as a singing waiter at the Rustic Cabin, a roadhouse in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, when trumpeter and bandleader Harry James came in one evening to size up the local talent. James hired Sinatra in February 1939, paying his protégé \$75 a week.

Soon Sinatra was aiming higher—at the country's top

band, led by trombonist Tommy Dorsey. In January 1940 Sinatra left James, who voluntarily tore up his singer's contract, to sign a three-year deal with Dorsey for \$125 a week. Sinatra learned a lot watching the trombonist work. "He would take a musical phrase and play it all the way through seemingly without breathing for 8, 10, maybe 16 bars," Sinatra told *Life* magazine in 1965. "Why couldn't a singer do that, too?" Sinatra also listened to violinist Jascha Heifetz, noting how Heifetz maintained a melody line without taking a break. "It was my idea to make my voice work in the same way as a trombone or a violin—not sounding like them, but 'playing' the voice like those instruments."



Tonight Only!

In 1943, Sinatra reunited with Harry James, far left, for a single show at the Hollywood Canteen.

Sinatra studied microphone technique, using amplification to bond with his listeners as singers before him like Rudy Vallee, Russ Columbo, and especially Bing Crosby, had. “He played the mic with a virtuosity that influenced every singer to follow,” wrote Crosby biographer Gary Giddins. “It was his ultimate ally, perfectly suited to his way with dynamics and nuance and timbre.” Amplification meant singers no longer needed to belt to reach the balcony. Now they were able to whisper, sigh, and confess. Sinatra could sound like he was singing directly to the listener, a connection intensified by his smooth, soothing baritone. Delivering ballads, he came across as romantic, tender, and vulnerable.

In 1941, after *Billboard* named Sinatra America’s top vocalist, he began angling to get out of his three-year contract with Dorsey, in part because Columbia Records executive Emanuel “Manie” Sacks was offering a deal. Unlike James, however, Dorsey wanted a large payout. The negotiations left both men bitter. “I hope you fall on your ass,” Dorsey told Sinatra.

Nelson Smock Riddle joined the Dorsey band as a trombonist in 1944. Born on June 21, 1921, in Oradell, New Jersey, he was the only child of a

**MICROPHONES
LET SINATRA
SOUND AS IF
HE WAS IN
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ROMANTIC,
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dominating French mother and a sign-painter father. Interested in music, the youth learned to read music and play trombone and started performing and arranging—creating the musical framework for songs—with regional bands.

Riddle’s first important mentor, Bill Finnegan, had been arranging for Glenn Miller since the late 1930s. In weekly lessons, Finnegan taught young Riddle how to experiment with combinations of instruments to arrive at a unique sound for each song he arranged. Finnegan endorsed classical music “as the prime source for musical richness.”

When Miller’s demands on Finnegan’s time led the older man to quit teaching, Riddle freelanced as an arranger until bandleader Charlie Spivak hired him full time. “He was a nice guy, very humble,” Spivak saxophonist Don Raffell said of Riddle. “It seemed as though he felt intimidated at all times. His mother was the cause. She practically told him what time to go to the bathroom.” During World War II, Riddle served in the Merchant Marine, playing in and arranging for that service’s orchestra until he graduated to Dorsey’s band, joining on May 11, 1944, in Chicago. “Tommy

was pleasant to me in his own particular gruff way and quite supportive of my budding career as an arranger,” Riddle said. “He was, and always will be, one of my heroes.”

Riddle profited from his exposure to Dorsey’s arrangers, citing Eddie Sauter, Hug Winterhalter, and Freddie Norman as influences.

Drafted in April 1945, Riddle spent an uneventful 14 months in the Army, returning to New York to freelance as an arranger until singer and radio show host Bob Crosby lured him to California to handle that role for Crosby’s program. That partnership didn’t last, but Riddle found work writing music for NBC radio. He also studied with Italian-born composer Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, whose lessons on symphonic arranging had a huge impact. Riddle broke through in 1950 when he arranged “Mona Lisa” for Nat King Cole. That huge hit made Riddle a mainstay at Cole’s label, Capitol Records.

While Riddle was apprenticing, Sinatra was rising to dizzying heights. Something about the skinny young man with the oversize bow ties, the aching voice, and those blue eyes set young women called “bobby-soxers” ablaze. Louis B. Mayer at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer signed Sinatra to a seven-year acting contract—“one of the sweetest deals in movie history,” said James Kaplan in a 2010 biography. At Columbia, Sinatra established his first great musical partnership, with arranger/conductor and fellow Dorsey alum Axel Stordahl. Bald and tweedy, the pipe-smoking, professorial Stordahl wrapped Sinatra in almost classical arrangements. Biographer John Rockwell described the resulting recordings as “a wash of strings and lush, neo-Tchaikovskian arrangements to accompany Sinatra’s gorgeous, lyrical, intimate, introspective ballad singing.” His work with Stordahl earned Sinatra the nickname “The Voice.”

Sinatramania peaked on October 11, 1944, with the “Columbus Day Riots.” New York’s Paramount Theater had booked the vocalist, whose appearance drew a horde of bobby-soxers, numbering perhaps 10,000, to queue up along Broadway and around the block. When the situation boiled over, the 150-some policemen on hand proved no match for teenage hormones. “Shop windows were smashed; people were hurt and carried off in ambulances,” wrote Bruce Bliven in *The New Republic*. “For Sinatra that stand at the Paramount was a kind of culmination, the



final explosive orgy of his cult of youth,” wrote Kaplan. It seemed World War II was ending, and normal life was beckoning. Sinatra’s young followers were growing up.

After the war Sinatra succumbed to celebrity. If he wasn’t slugging reporters, he was squiring women not his wife, Nancy, around town. An affair with smoldering actress Ava Gardner ended his marriage. MGM canceled his movie contract. His left-leaning politics caught the FBI’s attention. Sinatra’s professional life was just as rocky. His record sales were in decline, his voice was showing signs of strain, and his movies were diminishing in quality and popularity. The crisis at the Copa was a physical manifestation of a career in free fall.

At Columbia, oboist-turned-producer Mitch Miller became chief of recording. Miller had a

Early Days

In 1940, bandleader Tommy Dorsey, top left, was helping the singer become the star who launched a zillion screams when he played the Paramount in 1944.



Men of Parts

Clockwise from above: at Capitol's new studio, Sinatra conducts the orchestra with Riddle at his left; the two in a different session; in 1958, Sinatra's TV show brought him together with Riddle, Ella Fitzgerald, and pianist Bill Miller.

knack for producing gimmicky hits. However, except for *Sing and Dance with Frank Sinatra*, a 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm 10-inch with up-tempo arrangements by George Siravo that went nowhere commercially despite a degree of quality, Miller's stewardship of Sinatra marked the nadir of the singer's career. Miller's touch was exemplified by "Mama Will Bark," a duet with Swedish model Dagmar augmented by a man howling like a dog. Sinatra and Columbia parted ways in 1952.

At 37, Frank Sinatra had the hallmarks of a has-been—until he desperately but successfully lobbied Columbia Pictures boss Harry Cohn to cast him as the doomed GI Maggio in the adaptation of James Jones's eve-of-World War II novel *From Here to Eternity*. The role would win Sinatra an Academy Award for best supporting actor. And then Capitol Records gambled on him.

Several people took credit for getting Sinatra to his new label. Capitol artist Jo Stafford said she touted the singer to producer Dave Dexter Jr., who went to hear him and was moved to give a favorable report. But Alan Livingston, Capitol vice president for artists and repertoire, said Sinatra's agent

had called him, trying to gauge Capitol's interest. "Sinatra had hit bottom, and I mean bottom," record company executive Livingston told author Charles L. Granata. "He couldn't get a record contract, and he literally, at that point, could not get a booking in a nightclub. It was that bad—he was broke, and in a terrible state of mind."

Livingston signed Sinatra anyway.

His first Capitol recording was a 45-rpm single, "Lean Baby" and "I'm Walking Behind You," arranged and conducted by Stordahl and recorded on April 2, 1953. Sinatra wanted to keep working with Stordahl; the label preferred to pair him with brash, playful bandleader Billy May. But the hard-drinking trumpeter, known for his group's energetic brass and "slurping saxes," was on tour, so Capitol enlisted Riddle. "We were all very high on Nelson, he was marvelous!" Alan Livingston said. "He knew how to back a singer, and make them sound great, and I wanted Frank to have the benefit of that."

Livingston booked Riddle for a session with Sinatra on April 30. The men had crossed paths in 1944 when Sinatra hosted the Dorsey band on radio show *All-Time Hit Parade*, but Sinatra seems not to have made that connection.

“Frank came in, and saw a strange man on the podium, and said, ‘Who’s this?’” producer Alan Dell said. “I said, ‘He’s just conducting the band—we’ve got Billy May’s arrangements.’” Knowing Capitol’s preferences, Riddle even had made the session’s first two arrangements—“I Love You” and “South of the Border”—sound like May’s work; the label on the single “South of the Border” credits May. One chart was pure Riddle, however. “I’ve Got the World on a String,” with its brassy self-confidence, announced the arrival of a different Frank Sinatra. Yesterday’s tremulous, vulnerable crooner had become manly, upbeat, tough, exuberant. Sinatra listened to the tapes.

“Jesus Christ, I’m back,” he said. “I’m back, baby, I’m back!”

That session began a collaboration that continued, off and on, for more than three decades—according to Riddle biographer Peter J. Levinson, a total of 318 recordings, plus 25 television programs and the soundtracks to seven motion pictures.

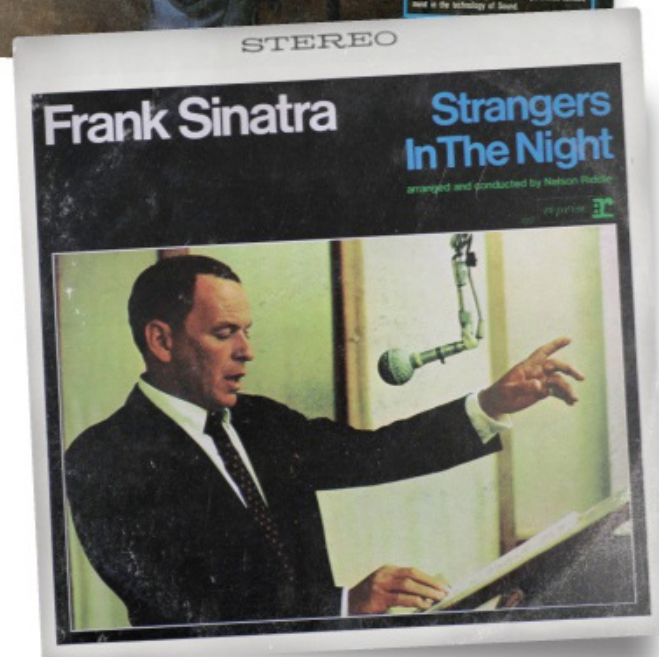
“Sinatra and Riddle remained essential to each other because each man pushed the other to heights neither could achieve individually,” wrote music historian Will Friedwald. “And the Sinatra-Riddle sound has since become what we think of when we think of Sinatra; the pre-Riddle period can be reduced to a prelude; the post-Riddle era to an afterthought.”

At a glance, Sinatra and Riddle seemed similar: both were Jersey boys and only sons of dominating mothers. Both emerged from the Big Band era and duty with Tommy Dorsey. But there the equivalency ended. The singer was a hot-tempered boozier, a brawler who wore his nerves on his sleeve. The arranger was quiet and introspective, with a sardonic wit born of a grim childhood. Julie Andrews called him “Eeyore.” Biographer Peter J. Levinson summed up Riddle’s demeanor as “gloom and unhappiness.”

Recording with Sinatra, Riddle said, could be “tense and businesslike.” Work on an album started when the two met to discuss approaches to the songs Sinatra wanted to sing. He would start “with the most agonizingly specific comments on the first few tunes, often referring to classical compositions for examples of what he expected to hear in the orchestration,” Riddle recalled. But Sinatra was known for a short attention span when not actually recording and after giving a few detailed instructions he would drift into vagueness, finally telling Riddle to do what he felt was best. “My headache would start to subside, my pulse return to normal, and another Sinatra-Riddle album would be launched,” Riddle said.

Outlines in place, Riddle built arrangements around Sinatra. His constructions could be for a dark-night-of-the-soul LP like 1958’s *Only the Lonely* or an upbeat array like *A Swingin’ Affair!* in 1957. Writing with pencil on pads of yellow or green score paper, Riddle reached into his arranger’s “tool kit”—adding a tinkling celesta to enhance the wistful introduction to “In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning” or having explosive trumpets kick off “Night and Day”—to create contexts for Sinatra’s

“I’VE GOT THE WORLD ON A STRING” WAS PURE RIDDLE, ANNOUNCING THE ARRIVAL OF A NEW SINATRA: MANLY, UPBEAT, TOUGH, EXUBERANT.



Everybody’s Pal
Riddle-inflected LPs made the singer a constant companion for generations of pop music fans.



The Working Life

In 1950, Riddle was just another arranger, highly regarded but still among the run of the musical mill.

voice, keeping in mind the singer's demands and his talent, along with the attributes of individual instruments and how they interacted. Riddle developed a mastery for weaving arrangements around Sinatra, underscoring his vocals with strings or punctuating with trumpets, French horns, flutes, trombones, or saxophones. Riddle told British writer Robin Douglas-Home that on a Sinatra arrangement he followed two main rules. The first was to find the song's peak and build everything around that. "Second—when he's moving, get the hell out of the way; when he's doing nothing, move in fast and establish something," Riddle said. "After all, what arranger in his right mind would try to fight *against* Sinatra's voice?"

Riddle listed a third key ingredient. "Music to me is sex," he said. "It's all tied up somehow, and the rhythm of sex is the heartbeat." He thought his best material for Sinatra had "the tempo of the heartbeat."

Sessions "were loaded with electricity," Riddle wrote. Sinatra was an activist in the studio. Though he did not read music, he was a superlative musician who knew what he wanted to capture on disk and was quick to spot and question flaws. He might skip an arrangement and move on to the next number, but never in anger. "He'd never give out compliments, either," said Riddle. "If he said nothing, I'd know he was pleased. He just isn't *built* to give out compliments and I never expected them. He expects your best—just that."

Sinatra did hand out a few compliments in a 1961 talk with Douglas-Home. "Nelson is the greatest arranger in the world," he said. "A very clever musician, and I have the greatest respect for him. He's like a tranquilizer—calm, slightly aloof. Nothing ever ruffles him. There's a great *depth* somehow to the music he creates."

The apex of the Sinatra/Riddle collaboration may be their second full LP, *Songs for Swingin' Lovers!* Recorded over six days in January 1956 in Capitol Studio A at 5515 Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles, the album was done live—singer and musicians in the same studio. "Frank always preferred to be on stage with the band," Capitol mixer John Palladino told Charles L. Granata. "He wanted eye contact with everyone, he charged the musicians—that's what made his sessions so special."

Songs opens with "You Make Me Feel So Young," a jaunty introduction to the Capitol-era Sinatra. The first side ends on a more thoughtful

note with “Love Is Here to Stay” by George and Ira Gershwin. The song, one of the LP’s more subdued numbers, opens with Sinatra’s longtime pianist Bill Miller, one of a platoon of musicians who recorded with the singer and Riddle over the years. Another was trumpeter Harry “Sweets” Edison, whose muted instrument always provides the perfect playful touch. A third was bass trombonist George Roberts, whose sound made a big impact on Riddle’s work and who later provided the ominous melody line in John Williams’s theme for *Jaws*.

Trombonist Milt Bernhart makes himself heard on the standout track, Cole Porter’s “I’ve Got You Under My Skin.” Sinatra added the chart at the last minute—to arrange it, Riddle pulled a late-nighter—and recorded it on January 12, 1956. After running through the number the first time the musicians gave him a spontaneous ovation. “Skin” became an instant classic, from the open’s bouncing baritone saxophones and bells to the bari saxes winding things down. Sinatra had told Riddle he wanted a “long crescendo” and the arranger obliged, emulating Ravel’s “Bolero” in a middle section that raises the musical temperature before Bernhart’s trombone solo heats the song to fever pitch. “I left the best stuff I played on the first five takes,” Bernhart told Charles Granata. The brass section microphone was suspended overhead. On take 10, Bernhart said, the engineers asked for more volume. Sinatra fetched a box for Bernhart to stand on, putting the bell of his horn nearer the mic. After the song’s instrumental break, Sinatra leans in for an emotional climax before he and the band bring the song softly back to earth. “I’ve Got You Under My Skin” is one of the undisputed highlights of the Sinatra/Riddle songbook.

Sinatra had many other musical peaks, often with Riddle. There were valleys, too, but never again did Sinatra stand at the brink of failure the way he had before signing with Capitol. Eventually his arrangement with Capitol chafed. He left the label in 1960 for Reprise Records, which he founded to escape corporate control. Once his own Capitol contract ended, Riddle arranged five albums for Sinatra at Reprise. Though not all in the same league as the Capitol albums, the Reprise sides boast artful Riddle arrangements, from the string-drenched symphonics of *The Concert Sinatra* (1963) to the jazz organ percolating through *Strangers in the Night* (1966)—and they have Sinatra’s mature voice, aged like vintage bourbon.

Sinatra used arrangers other than Riddle, including Billy May, Don Costa, Quincy Jones,

and Gordon Jenkins. And Riddle kept busy, working with Ella Fitzgerald, Judy Garland, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Oscar Peterson, and many other artists, as well as scoring for movies and television and releasing recordings with the Nelson Riddle Orchestra.

The partnership foundered in 1978, when Sinatra abruptly canceled an appearance at a tribute for Riddle, a slight the arranger could not forgive. The two never recorded together again, although Sinatra hired Riddle as musical director for a Ronald Reagan inaugural concert in January 1985. Nelson Riddle died that October 6, not long after charting with albums of standards he arranged and conducted for pop singer Linda Ronstadt that capitalized on his Sinatra sound.

When Sinatra died in 1998, he was celebrated as a giant of American popular music, a status grounded by the musical foundation Nelson Riddle provided. “Nelson’s arrangements allowed Frank to swing like I’d never heard him swing,” drummer Greg Field told Riddle biographer Levinson. “That ‘I’ve Got the World on a String’ arrangement sounded as modern as anything we played. The beginning of the Frank Sinatra we all knew and loved—I think Nelson had a massive impact on that.” ★

ARRANGED BY RIDDLE IN A LATE-NIGHTER, “I’VE GOT YOU UNDER MY SKIN” BECAME AN INSTANT CLASSIC, FROM THE OPEN’S BELLS TO THE SAXES WINDING THINGS DOWN.

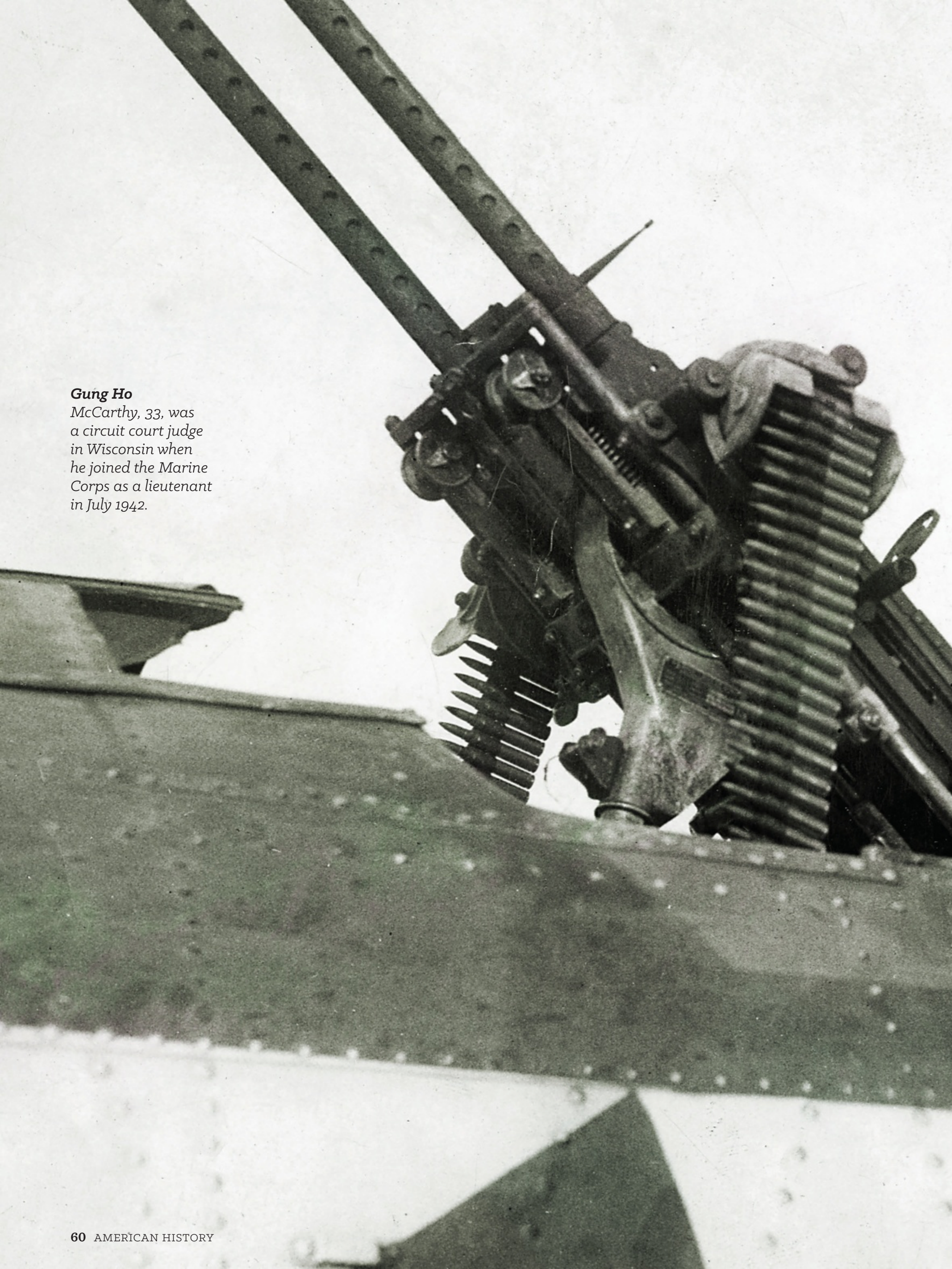
The Man to See

Nat King Cole’s 1950 “Mona Lisa” was a breakthrough for Riddle and his sound.



Gung Ho

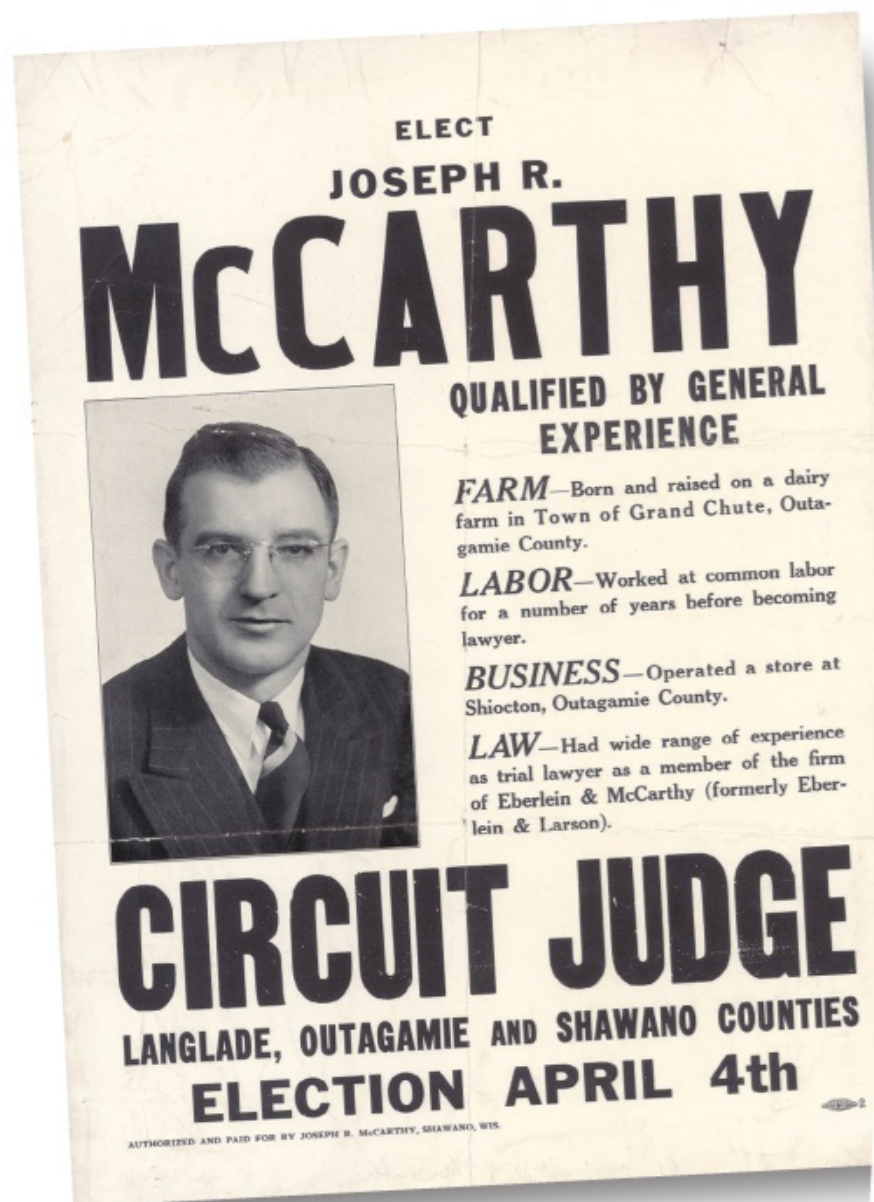
McCarthy, 33, was a circuit court judge in Wisconsin when he joined the Marine Corps as a lieutenant in July 1942.



The Death of Tailgunner Joe

The gentleman from Wisconsin engendered at least as much discourse in death as in life
By Larry Tye





Young Man in a Hurry

Finishing four years of high school coursework in a year, below, McCarthy went on to get the law degree that, along with political acumen, landed him a judgeship in 1939.



Everyone who ran into Senator Joe McCarthy (R-Wisconsin) that spring of 1957 had a vivid memory of how ill he was—jaundiced skin, unsteady balance, intermittent focus. It was a stunning contrast to the town bully who, a mere seven years before, had captivated the nation with his unsubstantiated charge that there were pinkos lurking behind every pillar at an out-of-touch State Department—and who, on the eve of his 1954 showdown with the U.S. Army, had the backing of a full 50 percent of his countrymen and the swagger that went with it.

“My last view of him was that of a drunk shuffling down a street near the Capitol,” said Irish-American historian George Reedy. “He was closing out the dark side of the victims of the Famine.” Speechwriter Ed Nellor paid the senator a long visit and remembered him as “dazed” and “punch-drunk.” At 1 the next morning McCarthy phoned Nellor at home, rousing his ex-aide from bed to ask when he might be dropping by. He had forgotten! At a meeting of the Wauwatosa School Board, a librarian from McCarthy’s home-state *Milwaukee Journal* observed Joe in need of rescue from the board’s cloakroom, where he’d become hopelessly entangled in coats and hardly was able to speak. When editors at the *Journal* heard about that, they assigned reporter Edwin Bayley full-time to writing the obituary of the pugnacious ex-Marine the world had come to know as Tailgunner Joe.

In his better moments, the senator, a faithful Catholic, seemed to be saying his goodbyes and asking for a kind of redemption. Two-and-a-half years earlier, his Senate colleagues had taken the rare step of condemning him for his incivility, although not for the Red-baiting, accusation by

association, fear-mongering, and political double-dealing that had turned the name McCarthy into an ism. “I picked up the telephone and it was Joe. It was the first time we had spoken to each other in exactly seven years,” recalled syndicated columnist and McCarthy nemesis Drew Pearson. “The following conversation took place: ‘Drew, are you sitting down?’ ‘Yes,’ I replied. ‘Well, I wanted to make sure you weren’t standing up or you’d faint. I just wanted to tell you that I’m putting your column today in the *Congressional Record*. As you know, I don’t always agree with what you say but this column I know tells the truth’...We exchanged a few pleasantries and I thanked him. That was the end of the conversation...I couldn’t help but feel sorry for him. He was a very lonesome guy.”

Another bitter adversary, former Army lawyer John Adams, had a similar experience. Adams’s faceoffs with the second-term senator had been a centerpiece of the famous April 22-June 17, 1954, U.S. Senate hearings into McCarthy’s charges that communists had infiltrated the U.S. Army. “I was sitting in my small law office near the District of Columbia courthouse,” Adams said. “He wanted me to come to see him at his home...I decided to go...He poured about six



Wary Allies

In 1952, GOP presidential hopeful Dwight Eisenhower, left, invited McCarthy, seeking to keep his Senate seat, to join him aboard the Eisenhower Special train. Ike wasn't happy with Joe, but at the time he chose appeasement over animosity.

ounces of Fleischmann's gin into a glass, added a little tonic and a lump of ice, and lumbered back into the living room. He looked awful. He had lost about 40 pounds, and his hands shook...McCarthy said that he had admired my integrity during the Army-McCarthy hearings... He then suggested that I now show my integrity by repudiating the Army position. He wanted me to join with him in some sort of statement which, he believed, would help him reestablish himself. He did not explain how if one show of 'integrity' repudiated another show of 'integrity,' either could be believed... 'It's no good, Joe,' I said. 'It won't work. It's over and finished; that's all. You can't change the truth'... After about an hour, I got up to leave. McCarthy walked with me to the door and stood there until I reached the sidewalk. I said, 'So long, Joe' to the cadaverous visage of McCarthyism, standing silently in the shadows, slowly dying." McCarthy's visit with Adams, his call to Pearson, and other belated bids for forgiveness all were on his terms. There is no evidence that he was thinking about the damage he'd wrought with his

MCCARTHY'S EFFORTS TO RECONCILE WITH FORMER FOES LIKE LAWYER ADAMS AND JOURNALIST PEARSON ALL WERE ON HIS OWN TERMS.

Red-baiting of the State Department and Army. And he was too busy feeling sorry for himself to have second thoughts about his victims, or even to acknowledge that his crusade against communism had generated casualties.

On April 28, 1957, Joe McCarthy checked into Bethesda Naval Hospital for the last time, for what was said to be treatment of an old knee injury. His 12th-floor room was under guard, with wife Jean the only visitor allowed, and much more than a knee was ailing him, as is evident in hospital records made available to this author. Since a previous admission in January, McCarthy's alcohol consumption had skyrocketed from "1/5 a day of whiskey" to "4/5's a day." His food intake had plummeted from "3 well rounded meals a day" to just beef broth. In late February "he began to have severe AM nausea & vomiting" along with "watery diarrhea," his doctor wrote, and "this past 2 weeks he has been



With His Lieutenants

Left, McCarthy during the 1954 Army hearings with aides David G. Schine and Roy Cohn; below, the senator and aide Robert F. Kennedy soon after the the Senate condemnation vote.



maintained on daily IV feedings—1500-2000 cc/day—Dextrose & H₂O.” McCarthy’s liver was enlarged, he was jaundiced, his temperature was spiking, and he’d been sedated even before arriving at the hospital.

Once their patient was admitted, doctors were by his bedside regularly and nurses were present non-stop, on “special watch,” taking notes on every occurrence in a way that made clear Navy brass knew not just how sick the senator was but how controversial. “Patient was looking up at me and all of a sudden threw up his hands. I took them in mine, and I noticed his eyes rolled back and his face and shoulders were getting very flush. He started to gag and I then noticed patient going into what seemed like a Grand [Mal] Seizure,” a nurse wrote the morning of April 29. “At first very hard jerks all over and then completely all over came to a calm, complete calm. I [immediately] got on the bed and began artificial respiration, patient started to breathe again.” Four hours later McCarthy had another seizure and “there was difficulty in getting tongue blade in mouth.”

That evening, after further convulsions, Joe “bit his tongue. He then began body tremors involving his arms, head, & the muscles of his chest, & abdomen & his legs.” He was hallucinating, soiling his bedclothes, venting a pneumonia-like rattle from his chest, and excreting blood-red urine.

Nurses tried to decipher his muttering. “I want to go home... [I] haven’t had a drink in two or three weeks...only a few beers.”

Later, he seemed to be making a “speech” where he “keeps addressing ‘Mr. President.’” He talked about “going to work, his duties to investigate.” What caregivers could make out most clearly was when he “stated he had a new baby and it was his life.”

The watch continued as Joe restlessly picked at his oxygen tent, then clapped his hands and began laughing. He waved his arms overhead “as if to ward off attackers, mumbling incoherently, ‘Get away, get away.’” On day five, he “seemed very hot to the touch.” His temperature registered 106 degrees, then an even more

**MCCARTHY’S
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DID HIM IN,
OR THE CIA.**

alarming 110. “Packed in ice chips,” his nurse recorded at 4 p.m. “Nasal oxygen started. Color ashen.” A Catholic priest delivered last rites. At 5:45 p.m., three doctors worked in tandem to administer artificial respiration. The nurse’s last entry was at 6:02 p.m. that Thursday, May 2, 1957: “Respiration ceased. Pronounced by Dr. Kenny.”

Nobody close to him was surprised by Joe McCarthy’s death. Members of his inner circle had known long before his final visit to Bethesda Naval that his fall from political grace had shattered his heart and that liquor was eating at his liver. Joe’s refusal to eat—or to stop drinking—suggested he’d lost the will to live. What is less clear is what actually killed him that perfect spring day in May. His doctors and his death certificate gave the reason as acute hepatitis, “cause unknown.” FBI files show reports of everything from bone cancer to a slow poisoning by radiated water, or arsenic, or carbon tetrachloride. Some said the Soviets did him in; others blamed the CIA. The senator’s widow was reported to be telling relatives she suspected foul doings. “The day that [Joe] died, [Jean] went to the hospital to pick him up, because he was feeling good, he was coming home,” Mary Reardon, Joe’s cousin, said Jean McCarthy confided to her mother. “He had his things packed and was ready to go home. And she went to the bathroom and to finish up some things at the desk, and when she came back, there were three men leaving his room. And when she got there he was dead.”

While such theories of intrigue befit the author of America's grandest conspiracies, they simply aren't true. Nurses, corpsmen, or physicians were by the senator's side continuously, making it nigh impossible for an enemy to do him harm. He didn't have cancer, and nothing indicates he was poisoned with arsenic or anything else. Yet McCarthy's hospital records do make clear one thing: he didn't die from hepatitis. Tests showed only modest elevations of the compound bilirubin in his blood and of the time his blood took to clot, two indications of mild liver disease, and there's little reason to believe that Joe's mild-to-moderate form of that ailment killed him. The immediate cause of Joe's death, say four of America's most distinguished doctors who recently reviewed McCarthy's files, almost certainly was the fever that spiked to deadly levels. That fever probably was triggered by severe symptoms of alcohol withdrawal, with seizures and delirium tremens, or DTs, which in that era killed a third of alcoholic patients. An infection—in McCarthy's urinary tract, around a catheter in his bladder, or in his lungs—could have aggravated his DTs and contributed to that sky-high body temperature. So could Joe's diseased liver, or even the newfangled anti-psychotic medications he was prescribed to control his agitation; such sedatives can interfere with temperature regulation and in rare cases lead to a fatal condition called neuroleptic malignant syndrome.

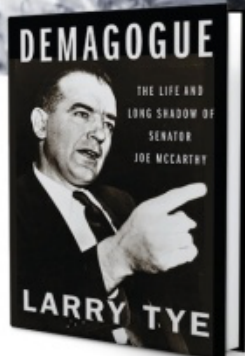
How could Joseph McCarthy's team of esteemed Navy doctors seemingly get this final judgment on the senator from Wisconsin so wrong? If McCarthy's demise had grown out of his DTs, as his hospital records suggest, the medical world had failed to appreciate the risk that condition posed or to treat his particular case as effectively as can be done today, when the mortality rate for DTs is under 5 percent. If neuroleptic syndrome did play a role, McCarthy's physicians wouldn't have known it; the first such episodes were only then being described, and in France. The syndrome was not widely recognized until the 1970s. If the senator had contracted pneumonia or some other deadly infection at Bethesda Naval Hospital, that facility's staff lacked access to current-day drugs and technology that might have saved him. Most likely hepatitis was the acceptable "vanilla" verdict for a man whose liver was diseased. The gesture of invoking hepatitis—especially with the scary modifier "acute," and absent the more accurate labels of alcoholic hepatitis or alcoholic cirrhosis—spared the McCarthy family the pain of publicly acknowledging Joe's



chronic and perhaps suicidal drunkenness. A concerted cover-up seems improbable, since the Bethesda Naval medical team requested an autopsy, which Jean McCarthy vetoed.

Tributes to the senator poured in from both sides of the McCarthy divide. President Dwight Eisenhower extended "profound sympathies" to Jean over the loss of the senator who'd branded him an appeaser. William Loeb, publisher of New Hampshire's right-wing *Manchester Union-Leader*, insisted Eisenhower was one of Joe's murderers, along with the communists. "No comment at all," Dean Acheson, the former secretary of state who McCarthy had branded "Red" Dean, said. "*De mortuis nil nisi bonum.*" (In English, that Roman aphorism reads, "Of the dead, say nothing but good.") Annie Lee Moss, a communications clerk targeted by McCarthy in his probe of the Army, said she was sorry to hear of her inquisitor's death. "But that's something we have all got to do sooner or later," Moss added. *The New York Times* led with an obituary, along with two full pages of retrospectives, but no editorial. "Why dignify the bastard?" editor Charles Merz explained later. "Let him pass from the scene without more attention."

Season's Greetings
Senator and Mrs.
Jean McCarthy in
Land O'Lakes,
Wisconsin. A similar
image appeared on
the couple's 1958
Christmas card.



Excerpted from *Demagogue: The Life and Long Shadow of Senator Joe McCarthy* copyright © 2020 by Larry Tye. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. All rights reserved.

Neither the Roman Catholic church nor the U.S. Senate appeared to have any such qualms. On Monday, May 6, a pontifical high requiem mass took place a few blocks from the White House at St. Matthew's Cathedral, where four years earlier Jean and Joe had wed. As 2,000 mourners listened, Monsignor John J. Cartwright said McCarthy's role in raising an alarm about communism "will be more and more honored as history unfolds its record." Later that day, Joe was memorialized in the chamber of the Senate that he had joined at 38 and where, in 1954, colleagues had voted overwhelmingly to denounce him. The last Senate funeral had been William Borah's in

1940, although leaders were quick to point out they would have done the same for any member whose family asked, as Jean had. "This fallen warrior through death speaketh," said Chaplain Frederick Brown Harris, "calling a nation of free men to be delivered from the complacency of a false security and from regarding those who loudly sound the trumpets of vigilance and alarm as mere disturbers of the peace." Seventy senators were on hand,

along with Jean Kerr McCarthy, three of Joe's siblings, Vice President Richard Nixon, Federal Bureau of Investigation Director J. Edgar Hoover, and McCarthy protégé Roy Cohn.

The next day Joe's body, accompanied by three of his closest Senate pals, was flown by military plane to Green Bay, Wisconsin, then driven 32 miles to Appleton. Disciples came in flocks that sun-baked Tuesday, packing the pews at St. Mary's and spilling onto the streets outside the Irish-American parish where Joseph Raymond McCarthy had been baptized and, six months shy of 49, was being eulogized. "Senator McCarthy was a dedicated man, not a fanatic," Father Adam Grill said. "The guidance of our beloved land is under the guidance of human beings and as human being[s] we are all fallible." Flags across Appleton were at half-staff, as they had been at



the White House and other public buildings in Washington, and in Appleton schools and shops were shuttered at midday. This was the last of three memorials and the first in the state that had easily and repeatedly elected McCarthy to state and national office; 25,000 friends and fans from Green Bay, Neenah, and McCarthy's native Grand Chute had paid their respects at his open casket. Others were keeping vigil outside the church alongside honor guards of military police, Boy Scouts, and Knights of Columbus members. On hand were 19 senators, seven congressmen, and a handful of other luminaries, most of whom had supported Joe in his relentless assault on communism.

Joe McCarthy was buried in St. Mary's cemetery, at his favorite spot on a tree-lined bluff

overlooking the Fox River. As a rifle squad of U.S. Marines and Catholic War Veterans members fired triple volleys, Jean stood at attention. The casket was lowered into the ground between the graves of Joe's parents, Timothy and Bridget, where a simple stone would read: Joseph R. McCarthy, United States Senator, Nov. 14, 1908–May 2, 1957.

Newspapers around the world ran obituaries, and commentators weighed in from the right and the left. The one who came closest to capturing the enigma—and the tragedy—of the Wisconsin senator may have been Eric Sevareid of CBS, one of the crusading wartime correspondents dubbed Murrow's Boys. McCarthy "was a sudden rocket in the sky, enrapturing some, frightening others, catching millions in a kind of spell that dissipated only when the rocket itself, as a rocket must, spluttered, went cold, and fell..." Sevareid said. "If history finds that McCarthy used his strength in a wrongful manner, it will find that the weakness of others was part of the fault." ★

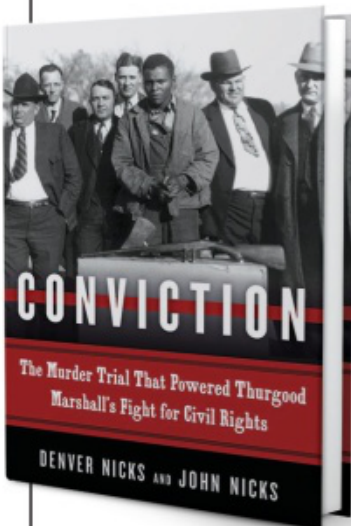
Final Farewell

Jean McCarthy, in black hat, and other mourners in St. Mary's cemetery as a Marine honor guard removes the flag from the late legislator's coffin.



Race Men
Marshall, right,
with fellow civil rights
movement leaders
Roy Wilkins, far left,
and Walter White

OUT OF EVIL, RIGHTEOUSNESS



**Conviction: The
Murder Trial That
Powered Thurgood
Marshall's Fight
for Civil Rights**

By Denver Nicks
and John Nicks
Lawrence Hill Books,
2019; \$26.99

The 1997 film *Amistad* chronicles an historic episode in which an American court tried kidnapped Africans for hijacking the ship hauling them to bondage. In it, an actor playing white antislavery activist Lewis Tappan suggests a wrongful conviction would suit the abolitionist cause more than an acquittal. A colleague decries Tappan's eagerness to martyr innocents, but the fact is that instances of grave injustice often serve as catalysts for reform.

Thus, one of Thurgood Marshall's few courtroom failures helped dismantle American racism. In trying Marshall's client William Lyons, convicted in 1941 of a heinous triple murder, Oklahoma authorities so abused justice that a community drenched in racial bias came to support an African American man wrongly accused. An appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court accomplished nothing. The justices distinguished between confessions made as a suspect was being beaten and those

made hours after the beating had ceased, ruling that while the former were coerced the latter were not, even if the prisoner confessed out of fear that violence might resume. Marshall prevented a capital sentence. Lyons was paroled after doing 20 years and in time received a legal pardon for his "crime." However, his conviction never was formally voided. Father and son John and Denver Nicks compellingly recount this underappreciated sequence of events in *Conviction*.

Elmer and Anna Marie Rogers and four-year-old son Elvie of Fort Towson, Oklahoma, died on New Year's Eve 1939 by shotgun and arson. The killer or killers likely came from a nearby state work camp so ill-run—inmates were allowed to leave the grounds unsupervised—that Fort Towson residents had been complaining about the camp for years.

An embarrassed Oklahoma Governor Leon Philips assigned the official inquiry to special

investigator Vernon Cheatwood. Cheatwood suppressed evidence, bragged about giving the third degree, and led police officers in blackjacking sharecropper Lyons, a known petty thief, into confessing. Given the era's and the region's prejudices, the state's case might have gone smoothly even with the brilliant Marshall for the defense.

However, so blatant was the prosecutorial crookedness that even staunch segregationists were thrilled by Marshall's relentless exposé of racist authoritarian duplicity—a performance whose power attracted considerable attention and money to his courtroom campaign against racism.—*James Baresel is a freelance writer living in Front Royal, Virginia.*

LEGAL REALIST

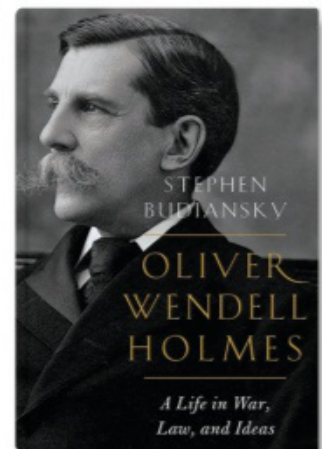
heroic figure. A Boston Brahmin, he dutifully entered Harvard, enlisted when civil war broke out in 1861, and served three years, suffering terribly. He was wounded three times, endured chronic dysentery, and almost died. Budiansky makes a case that Holmes's war erased his idealism.

An abolitionist before the war, he showed little interest in blacks after. He despised reformers. At 40, a successful, respected lawyer, he published *The Common Law*, still in print and, in Budiansky's eyes, "the single most important book in the history of American legal scholarship." It opens with the oft-quoted sentence, "The life of the law has not been logic; it has been experience." Holmes determined that English common law evolved through "legal realism," in which court decisions accounted for human nature and public policy. This seems reasonable to non-lawyers, but before Holmes, judges labored to find and apply "the law," enshrined in tradition or peerless authority such as the Constitution, with no role for compassion, tolerance and other messy concepts. Except for a few decades ending in the 1960s, legal realists have been a minority on the U.S. Supreme Court, on which Holmes served 1902-32. No gadfly, he usually voted with the majority—even when, during World War I, American law was strangling antiwar opinion. By the armistice he had changed his mind. In a classic 1919 case that saw radicals draw long prison terms for distributing leaflets denouncing U.S. intervention in Russia, his dissent still resonates—especially his statement that the best test of truth is its ability to get itself accepted in the competition of the market.

During post-World War II trials of communists and those of 21st-century Islamic radicals, judges, mostly dissenters, quoted Holmes. That hateful views deserve jail time seems reasonable to most Americans, judges included. The elderly Holmes became an icon as the embodiment of what a jurist ought to be. Humanitarian feelings were never his strong suit, but liberal colleagues like Louis Brandeis, Learned Hand, and Felix Frankfurter were not shy about giving advice during deliberations or complaining when his decisions fell short. They influenced but did not convert him. He denied Sacco and Vanzetti a stay of execution and pooh-poohed progressive programs except, sadly, eugenics.

In this outstanding biography Budiansky lucidly explains Holmes's ideas, vividly portrays other legal figures of the era, and delivers an insightful portrait of Holmes himself that remains admiring despite no shortage of warts. —*Mike Oppenheim writes in Lexington, Kentucky.*

When at 90 Oliver Wendell Holmes (1841-1935) retired from the Supreme Court, everyone agreed that he was America's greatest legal mind. Judges rarely lead gripping lives, but no subject is dull in expert hands, and Budiansky has written a *tour de force*, helped by Holmes himself, a fascinating if only intermittently



Oliver Wendell Holmes: A Life in War, Law, and Ideas

By Stephen Budiansky
Norton, 2019; \$29.95



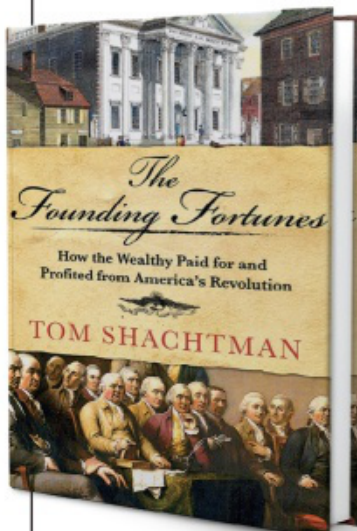
A Hard War

As a Union officer during the Civil War, the effects of disease, combat, and grave physical wounds cost Holmes his idealism.



Ben at the Ball
Shown charming Parisians, Benjamin Franklin, center, was among the bourgeois rebels who made a nation.

POWER TO THE PLUTOCRATS



The Founding Fortunes: How the Wealthy Paid for and Profited from America's Revolution

By Tom Shachtman
St. Martin's, 2020;
\$29.99

This cheeky, mildly revisionist account of America's founding declares not only that that grand gesture cost money, but that rich folks paid the freight. Historian Shachtman observes that, aside from John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and a few other middle-class strivers, the Revolution was the work of planters, merchants, and other pillars of the American elite.

To fund the revolt, the Continental Congress famously relied on printing money, charity, loans, and clumsy financial chicanery. We won anyway. Honest as well as self-serving monied men financed the war that made some rich and bankrupted others. A feeble nation emerged to no objection from average Americans, most of them farmers. However, merchants and planters chafed. European customers were cutting off their credit and demanding cash. State governments' war debts required hard currency. Taxes rose. Farmers found some safe harbor in barter, but taxmen wouldn't take chickens or corn. Defaulters lost their land. Tempers flared.

To explain the Constitutional Convention, most historians emphasize the weak confederation. However, that body irked only merchants active in foreign and interstate trade—and sorts like James Madison and Adams, who had firm ideas of what constituted government.

Shachtman contrarily cites Shays's Rebellion. Historians these days empathize with the

Massachusetts farmers who in 1786 rose up demanding tax relief, but that stand horrified most Founding Fathers. Within the year, 55 were meeting in secret to draft a Constitution that they then presented to states on a take-it-or-leave-it basis for ratification.

For a century scholars on the left have complained that self-interested plutocrats wrote the Constitution. Shachtman says so too, but sans the sans-culotte agitprop. He maintains that, unlike today's rentiers, the Constitution's composers did not pine to avoid paying taxes. They had no social welfare programs to oppose. There was no federal police force; hired operatives defeated Shays. The Founders were intent on pursuing law and order, hard money, reliable credit, a free internal market, and a central government that inspired respect.

The rich proclaim America the land of opportunity, Shachtman says; the difference today, he adds, is that they don't believe what they say. To the Founding Fathers, equal opportunity meant cheap land—which truly existed.

Today "opportunity" means government programs and rules, which the 1 percent scorns. *Founding Fortunes* acknowledges that deep pockets steer American government but, in the beginning at least, were doing so mostly on the side of the angels. —Mike Oppenheim writes in *Lexington, Kentucky*.

Compared to the other six occupants of the American presidency during that office's first half century, James Monroe seems uninteresting. His antecedents were war heroes, writers and signers of the Declaration, boldface figures who wrote and implemented the Constitution, creators of major political parties, and influential political theorists.

Monroe was different—an obscure Revolutionary War officer and participant not in the Constitutional Convention but his state's convention on ratification. His early political career and his brief stints as a senator, ambassador, and governor of Virginia signaled transient

A MAN AND HIS ERA

prominence. And by the time he achieved the presidency the Federalist Party had lost to the Democratic-Republicans and was fading into history, with the Whig/Democrat rivalry yet to emerge. The Monroe Doctrine was a rare departure from his otherwise quotidian record of governance.

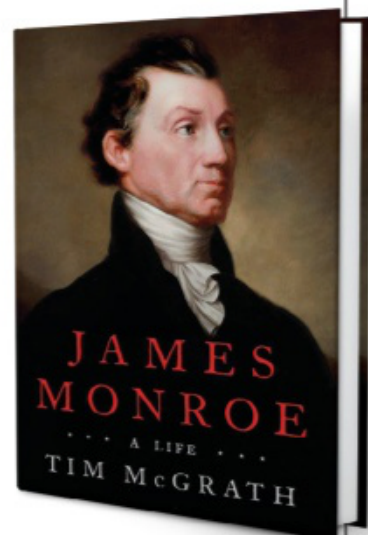
McGrath's extensive and detailed book shows that Monroe's life is fascinating because of the very factors which seem to count against that possibility. A marginal spot in the Venn diagram of leading rebellious circles and a later presidency assured him of a well-documented life. Remaining on the peripheries of early national leadership kept Monroe closer to ordinary people than a Washington or a Jefferson. The result is a rare window into revolutionary America's often underdocumented "middle management."

Monroe's superficially placid presidency likewise deceives.

"The era of good feelings" in truth was a time of realignment behind the scrim of single-party politics. Federalists and moderate Democratic-Republicans were beginning an *ad hoc* cooperation from which would emerge the Whig Party. Democratic-Republican hardliners were coalescing into the future basis of the Democrats.

More importantly, in Monroe's day the politics of revolutionary America were maturing—some might say "festering"—into those of the antebellum period. Early presidents had governed amid extensive and prolonged debate over the meaning of independence. Did it mean replacing colonial subjugation and a neo-monarchic nobility with a British alliance and an unlabeled *de facto* aristocracy? Or did independence bespeak egalitarian or libertarian democracy in the mode of revolutionary France? While Monroe was in office this conversation receded, replaced by sectional rivalry and the fight over slavery that led to civil war.

Monroe is not among the exemplars to hold the nation's highest office, but few presidents' lives illuminate as much about some of American history's most decisive events and changes as his does. —James Baresel is a freelance writer in Front Royal, Virginia.



James

Monroe: A Life

By Tim McGrath

Dutton, 2020; \$36



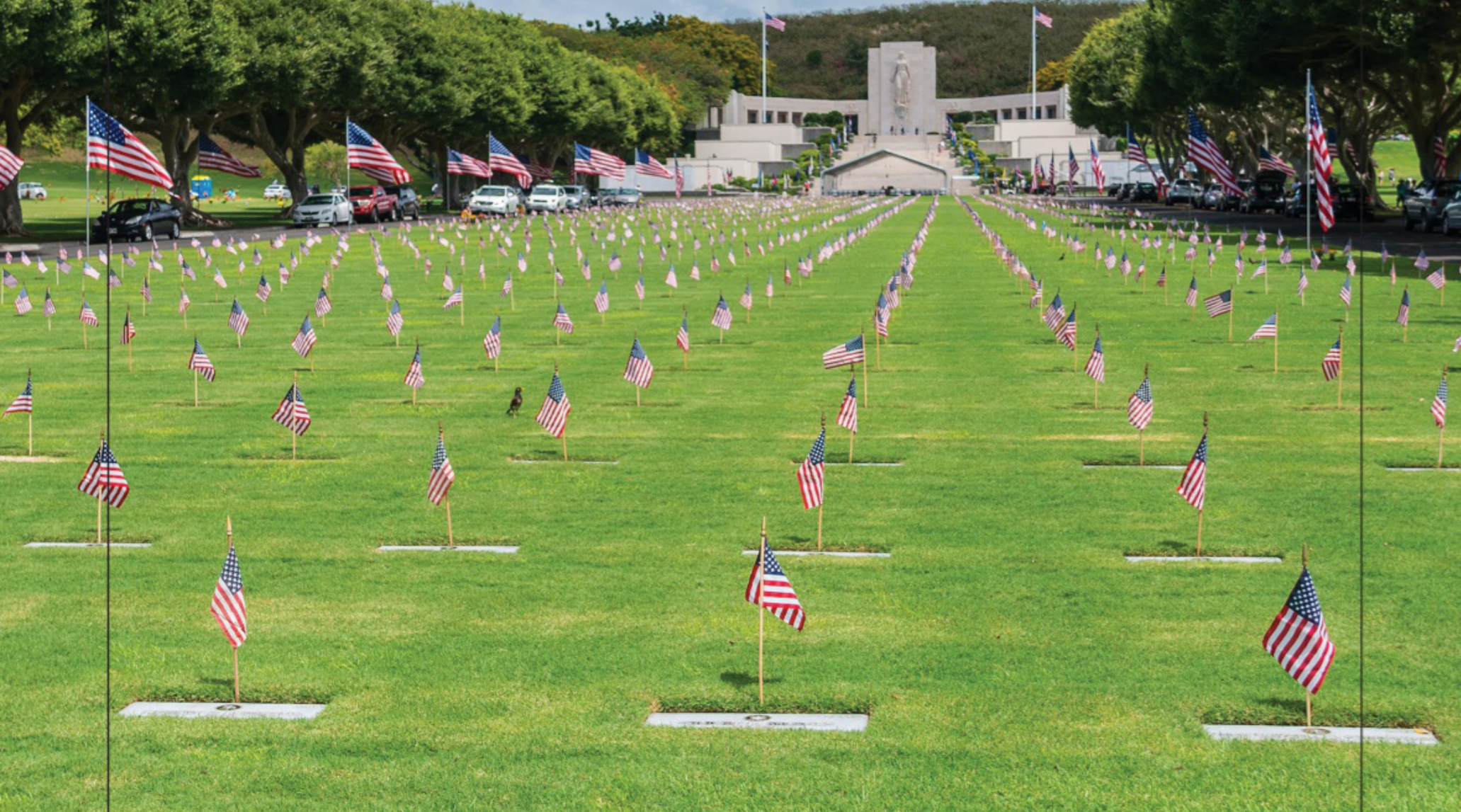
An American Lake

Monroe, center, with his inner circle, made blatantly clear in the 1823 doctrine that bears his name America's aim of controlling a sphere of influence beyond its official borders.

AN AMERICAN PLACE

Honored Dead

The Punchbowl's somber ambience belies the cemetery's proximity to Honolulu and its bustle, inset.



The National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific...

...on Oahu, Hawaii, holds the remains of more than 49,500 American military veterans. These honored dead rest inside an extinct volcano that rises 462 feet above the state's largest city, Honolulu. About 100,000 years ago, lava erupted through Oahu's coral and basalt base a mile inland, forming an ash cone crater. Ancient Hawaiians, who executed cultural lawbreakers here to propitiate Polynesian deities, called the place *Puowaina*—"hill of sacrifice." Kamehameha of Maui consolidated most of the Hawaiian Islands under his rule in 1795, whereupon he mounted guns on Puowaina's rim to discourage seaborne attacks. That two-cannon battery saluted visiting dignitaries until Hawaii became an American territory in 1898. Honolulu developed around the base of the crater, whose shape inspired the nickname "Punchbowl." After bulldozing the cone's interior for use as a rifle range, the military installed artillery to defend Honolulu Harbor. In 1943, the territorial government offered the Punchbowl's lush grounds as a permanent resting place for Pacific theater casualties. Eventually 13,000 World War II dead, 4,167 from Korea, and many from Vietnam were interred there. Overlooking the fallen, a massive Italian marble memorial honors 26,000 Americans missing in action from those conflicts. —*Jessica Wambach Brown contributes regularly from Kalispell, Montana.*



DOUGLAS PEEBLES PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; GORDON FAHEY/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

TODAY IN HISTORY

JULY 17, 1918

TSAR NICHOLAS II OF RUSSIA AND HIS FAMILY WERE EXECUTED. YEARS LATER, CONSPIRACY THEORIES EMERGED, AND IMPOSTORS BEGAN TO SURFACE. AN EASTERN EUROPEAN WOMAN NAMED ANNA ANDERSON CLAIMED TO BE GRAND DUCHESS ANASTASIA ROMANOV, SPARED DEATH IN 1918 BY A SYMPATHETIC GUARD. TEN YEARS AFTER HER DEATH IN 1994, DNA TESTING CONCLUDED SHE WAS NOT ANASTASIA BUT A MISSING POLISH FACTORY WORKER.

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